SN Soc Sci (2022) 2: 172
https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-022-00464-y

REVIEW PAPER

The Gothic Revival in nineteenth century Catholic America: Patrick Charles Keely (1816–1896) and his extensive contribution

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Received: 15 July 2021 / Accepted: 22 July 2022 / Published online: 22 August 2022
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Abstract

Patrick Charles Keely was arguably America's greatest nineteenth century Catholic architect. He was responsible for the designs of hundreds of Catholic churches and cathedrals across the north-east of the region throughout the century. He was also instrumental in transforming contemporary Catholic church designs, when he introduced Gothic Revival styles to Catholic church building in the 1840s. By categorising and documenting the styles of the notable Catholic churches that were constructed during the period, this research demonstrates that not only did Keely introduce Gothic Revival architecture to Catholic church building, but he also popularised it to the extent that it became the dominant style for Catholic church construction for the rest of the century. He also continuously developed the style in line with changing architectural concepts and fashions and modified his own version of the Gothic style, to make it affordable for less affluent congregations.

Keywords Keely · Gothic · Ecclesiastical · Architecture · Nineteenth century

Introduction

General introduction

Patrick Charles Keely (1816–1896) was arguably the most prolific Catholic architect of nineteenth century America. He was responsible for the designs of most Catholic Cathedrals in the north-east of the region, as well as several hundred parish churches throughout the century (Kervick 1953). Born in Thurles in County Tipperary on the 9th of August 1816, Keely (or Kiely as he was known in Ireland) spent his formative years there before he emigrated to the United States in 1842. He settled in

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Brooklyn at a time when the Catholic population in America was expanding rapidly, but Catholic architects were rare (Smith 2006). He quickly became the dominant Catholic architect of the era and helped standardise Catholic church design in the United States (Kervick 1953).

Keely was an instrumental figure in introducing "ecclesiastically correct" Gothic Revival architecture into American Catholic church building when he was first commissioned to work on Saints Peter and Paul's church in Williamsburg. The church was dedicated in 1846 and set Keely's architectural career in motion, as he went on to design upwards of 600 churches and cathedrals throughout the century. The dedication of the church marked a "new epoch" for American Catholic church building (Kervick 1953) and ultimately transformed nineteenth century Catholic church construction and design, as the Gothic Revival style took hold and remained the dominant style for church building for the rest of the century.

However, despite his achievements, Keely's work is seriously understudied when compared to other contemporary American ecclesiastical architects such as Richard Upjohn and James Renwick. His commissions are largely unacknowledged in many general Gothic Revival publications, and information regarding his career is generally confined to specialised Catholic literature such as parochial histories and diocesan chronicles (Purcell 1943). The scant mention in general Gothic Revival publications of Catholic Church building in America and its strong Irish associations could be attributed to issues concerning the way in which Irish Catholic history was traditionally portrayed within the general history of the United States, which was often built on an Anglo-Protestant or post-Protestant culture (Gleason 1970). Therefore, researching and recording the churches of Patrick Charles Keely provides a more holistic perspective of the Gothic Revival in America that includes Catholic church building alongside Protestant study. It also adds to the legacy of the growth of the American Catholic church in the nineteenth century and its associated Irish heritage, as well as expanding on the legacy of Patrick Charles Keely himself. A legacy, which architect Francis W Kervick (1953) described as "sorely neglected".

Irish background

Keely spent his formative years in Thurles, County Tipperary before he left for the United States in 1842. He lived there when the town was going through significant changes in its religious and physical development, due to the plentiful Catholic worship spaces, associated religious orders and educational institutions that were proliferating within the town (Corbitt 1989). These developments had so much of an impact that, in 1838, the Roman Catholic Directory described Thurles as "the most decidedly Roman Catholic town in Ireland, with the exception of Galway", adding further that, "the eye is struck with the number, as well as the beauty of the edifices sacred to religion and education" within the town (Condon 1989). Central to this was the "Big Chapel", which was constructed in 1807 and it was described by Samuel Lewis in 1837, who was the editor and publisher of topographical dictionaries and maps of Britain and Ireland as, "one of the finest buildings of its kind in Ireland". The contemporary writings of Thomas Lacey also described the building

as a "very fine structure of modern dimensions and a cruciform character" (O'Toole 1989).

Coming from an affluent background, Keely spent his youth surrounded by Catholicism and religious building. He grew up in a home once occupied by the Presentation Sisters (Kervick 1953) and his father, William Kiely, was a builder of local renown. Kiely Snr was involved in the construction of several churches, along with his most notable work in assisting in the building of St Patrick's College (Purcell 1943). St Patrick's College is a distinguished institution that was founded in 1837 to provide a liberal education for the Catholic youth, that were destined for the priesthood, or professional and business careers. The founding stone for the building was laid in 1829 by the Archbishop of Cashel, Robert Laffan (1765–1833) in the presence of a large gathering, as well as the leading campaigner for Emancipation and the Repeal movement, Daniel O'Connell (O'Dwyer 1989). Whether Keely attended this is not known, but his surrounding environment in his formative years was steeped in religious revival, Irish Catholic political interests and mass Catholic building; and it evidently had a profound effect on his career choices when he moved to the United States.

Catholicism in early nineteenth century Ireland

The extensive building programme that was taking place in Thurles was part of a wider rapid Catholic building era that proliferated in Ireland (Purcell 1943). This was a time of great political and religious revival for Catholics on the island, as they were released from the last vestiges of penal legislation through Emancipation in 1829 and in turn, gained full religious, civil and political equality (Walker 2000). In the years preceding Emancipation, the minority landowners and nobility of the established Church of Ireland had complete political, economic and social domination over the majority Catholic population (Abramson 1973; Sheehy 1995). Catholic oppression was enacted through a series of penal laws, that came into effect in 1695 (Walker 2000), that deprived Catholics of their civil, political and religious freedoms (Elliott 2001). Primarily, the legislation prevented Catholics of acquiring land or owning property, and whatever land they did own was broken up upon death, by the forbiddance of the practice of primogeniture. Catholics were also excluded from political and legal professions, along with certain trades, due to the requirement to swear an oath abjuring the temporal authority of the Pope; and they also had to renounce their belief in transubstantiation (Sheehy 1995). They also suffered a range of legal disabilities, that affected everything from their education and horse ownership, to bearing arms (Larkin 2014a, b).

However, despite the poverty and persecutions, eighty-one percent of the population remained Catholic (Gilley 2006) and things began to improve for them towards the end of the eighteenth century, with the implementation of various relief acts. Also, due to the expansion of industrialisation, an increasingly prosperous Catholic middle class, that was largely made up of farmers and merchants (Sheehy 1995) joined the residual Catholic gentry that had remained from Cromwellian times. These Catholics became involved in trade and business, growing in wealth and

status, and by the 1780s, one-third of Dublin's merchants were Catholic. The various relief acts also resulted in their rights to purchase and bequeath land, along with the right to practice at the bar and their consciousness of being a community on the rise enabled them to prosper further (Larkin 2014a, b).

The Catholic Church also restructured and reorganised itself in the wake of its increasing political power and growing confidence (Elliott 2001). This reorganisation involved the consolidation of a hierarchical structure and the establishment of a network of parishes. By 1836, the Church had established four Archbishopricsin Armagh, Dublin, Tuam and Cashel, and there were also twenty-six Sees. There was also a total of twenty-two bishops and nine-hundred and seventy parish priests practicing throughout the region. A mass church building programme was a natural consequence of these developments and 1805 churches were built in Ireland in the first half of the nineteenth century; with building costs largely subsidised by the emerging Catholic middle class (Sheehy 1995, p. 137). There was also a huge increase in the establishment of religious orders, that provided a whole range of charitable services, as well as the development of a Catholic education system (Brooks 1995, NIAH 2006). Church attendance also improved and by 1835, an estimated 70% of the population were going to church within the towns, although numbers were less in rural areas at approximately 40% (Gilley 2006; Walker 2000)

This Catholic Revival period in Ireland coincided with a "Devotional Revolution", an international phenomenon taking place within the church, that took root in the aftermath of the French Revolution; and was encouraged by Popes Pius IX and Leo XIII (Heimann 2006). It had a direct impact on the Catholic church in Ireland and involved the publicising of devotions and the raising in status of feast days, by offering special indulgences for their practice and blessings for their sodalities (Gilley 1984). This resulted in the increased importance of devotional cults such as the Rosary, the thrice-daily recitation of the Angelus, novenas, the Stations of the Cross, Forty Hours Adoration and the Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament (Walker 2000). Under the leadership of Cardinal Paul Cullen and the Ultramontane movement, devotional worship assumed the rights of a national movement in Ireland in the mid-nineteenth century, which accompanied an increased devotion to the Pope, along with universal church conformity to the rites and customs of the Church in Rome (Gilley 1984). The Church continued to develop dramatically throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century and by the end of the century, it acquired almost all its modern characteristics, such as a highly visible organisational structure, a disciplined clergy, a high level of religious instruction and practice, church control of Catholic education and activities, as well as visible allegiance to Rome (Elliott 2001).

The Irish in America

From 1634 until 1800, the Catholic population in America largely consisted of a small minority of socially accomplished English Catholics. Sixty to eighty percent of the 25,000 Catholic population in 1784 were recorded as English in origin and 22,000 of them were settled in Maryland and Pennsylvania (Egan 1968). Up until

the second decade of the nineteenth century, the Catholic church in the United States was considered a small and insignificant denomination, that was scattered across the north-eastern region. The Catholic worship practices of the time consisted of "no fuss or extremes" and the bishops of the era, such as John Carroll (1735–1815) and John Cheverus (1768–1836) had the reputation of being "polished gentlemen" and "treasures" who "rubbed along nicely" with their "Protestant neighbours" within the social community (Dolan 2009).

The situation began to change around 1800, as despite the changing fortunes for the Catholic Church in Ireland, many Irish Catholics still lived precariously around subsistence level. This was due to continued economic instability and persecutions. The majority poor were still subjected to oppressive penal laws and most laboured for landlords under a heavy burden of taxation. Also, The Act of Union established in 1801 eliminated any semblance of Irish independence and deprived the Irish Catholic population of any political self-determination (O'Connor 1998). Circumstances exacerbated in 1815, in the aftermath of the Napoleonic wars (1803–1815) and Anglo-American War (1812–1815). Britain and Ireland entered an economic recession that coincided with the "Year Without Summer" in 1816, causing failed harvests, famine and outbreaks of typhoid, which led to the deaths of an estimated 100,000 people (Donnelly et al 2020).

Irish Catholics emigrated in small numbers to the United States in the years preceding 1815, but these catastrophic events sparked a mass phenomenon (Gilley 2006). By 1825, mass Irish Catholic immigration had become established in America, due to continuing economic downturns, waves of unemployment, intermittent starvation, and political uncertainty (Egan 1968). It is estimated that one million Catholics left Ireland for America between 1800 and 1845 (Donnelly et al. 2020). Although, it should be noted that not all Irish immigrants were poor and dispossessed, and there were many comfortably off immigrants, like Keely, who emigrated to America in search of better opportunities. Irish Catholic emigration eventually reached a peak around 1850, due to dramatic consequences surrounding the Great Famine; when an estimated two million Irish Catholics left for American Shores between 1840 and 1860. This resulted in the American Catholic population becoming overwhelmingly immigrant and Irish (Dolan 2009; Gleason 1970), with Catholic immigration from other European countries, as well as Canada, almost negligible in comparison (Egan 1968). The impact of this was so great, that after the Civil War (1861–1865), the Catholic population in the United States totalled an approximate 3.5 million and it became the single largest Christian denomination in the region (Dolan 2009). The immigrants largely settled in the New England and mid-Atlantic States and the Catholic populations in these areas became almost solidly Irish (Gleason 1970).

This resulted in the American Catholic Church becoming increasingly dominated by an effective Irish contingent (Shea 1878; Smith 2006) and they brought to the church their religious heritage from Ireland, that, as already outlined, was fast becoming parish orientated (Dolan 2009). The change in hierarchy to Irish domination reflected the dramatic shifts in cultural and national origins of the American Catholic population and it was a natural progression that was not the result of any political manoeuvres by the Irish, or other foreign-born ecclesiastics (Gleason

1970). Consequentially, the Irish took the lead on the mass Catholic church building that began around 1830 (Shea 1878; Smith 2006) and by the mid-nineteenth century, they were also involved in the construction of other Catholic associated buildings such as convents, schools and hospitals. This Church building was largely financed through the petty donations of poor, generous and fervently religious congregations (Purcell 1943) and the Irish were also in control of almost all the Catholic press (Gleason 1970). The expansion of the Church was so dramatic that militant attempts by various nativist movements in the 1850s and 1860s, to curb mass Irish Catholic immigration did little to halt the changing religious and ethnic demographics (O'Connor 1998). Or the rapid development of the Catholic Church and the establishment of churches and associated religious institutions within the United States (McCaffery 1976).

Architectural development of the Irish catholic church

As already noted, the outcome of the Revival and Renewal period in Ireland was the dramatic increase in Catholic church building in the years immediately succeeding emancipation (NIAH 2006). However, contrary to popular narratives, Catholic church building was an ongoing phenomenon throughout the eighteenth century in Ireland, but due to restrictions on church building laid out in penal legislation, these

Fig. 1 St Mary's Catholic Church Lag, Donegal (1784). *Source* cc-by-sa/2.0—© David Dixon—geograph.org.uk/p/5680101

were generally vernacular structures that ranged from barn-type buildings to stone slate chapels; with little architectural pretension (Fig. 1) (Oram 2001; Sheehy 1995). The architecture reflected the insularity and self-effacement that Catholics had become accustomed to after years of discrimination and prejudice (Brooks 1995); with scholar Douglas Scott Richardson (1970) describing it as the "architecture of repression".

However, a relaxation of laws in the Catholic Relief Act of 1782 restored the right for Catholics to purchase land and restrictions on practicing Catholic Clergy were also rescinded (Rogers and Macauley 1984). These developments, along with the emergence of an increasingly prosperous Catholic middle class contributed to a greater availability of resources for the building of Catholic churches; and with the implementation of the Catholic relief Acts, the building of low-key structures was no longer necessary (Walker 2000). This, in turn, led to the development of progressively assertive architectural styles and the late Georgian Period witnessed the introduction of large Catholic churches built in Classical styles (Oram 2001). These churches were generally plain, rectangular buildings that featured attached temple-like fronts that were of Georgian-Classical or neo-Greek forms (Fig. 2) (Oram 2001).

Any Gothic structures built at this time were purely aesthetic in nature and were marked by a casual attitude to historical accuracy (Loth and Sadler 1975) that was rooted in the romanticising of Gothic structures and ruins in the eighteenth century. Picturesque Gothic styles were popularised through popular fiction

Fig. 2 St Mary's Pro-Cathedral, Dublin (1825). *Source* wiki

of the Georgian era. A prominent influencer was art historian and Whig politician Horace Walpole (1717–1797) who revived an interest in Gothic architecture through his fictional works such as *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) (Eastlake 1979). He was also the first influential man in the eighteenth century to "gothicise" a building on a large scale, when in 1747, he began refurbishing his home, Strawberry Hill in Twickenham into a "mock" Gothic style (Clarke 1969; Lewis 2002).

Picturesque Gothic churches of the time (Fig. 3) usually contained two-dimensional pointed arches, battlements and parapets that were not responsible for any structural support of the building (Stanton 1968; Walker 2000). They generally kept to the plans of the Classical churches of the same period, which were built to accommodate Protestant preaching centred worship practices. Common characteristics included an open hall space which was filled with box pews, that focused on a centralised high pulpit, which placed the preacher in the centre of the congregations hearing and vision. Galleries were also often included to accommodate more parishioners, and these usually ran three lengths of the interior (Pugin 1836; Walker 2000). Catholic church building of the time generally adhered to the popular building designs of contemporary Protestant churches, but with some slight variation. Due to the importance of Catholic sacramental practices, an alter took centre stage instead of a pulpit and this was usually placed in a dimensionally small chancel, and in some cases a recess (Fig. 4) (Clarke 1969; Oram 2001).

Fig. 3 Old St Patrick's Church, Donegall Street, Belfast, N Ireland (1815). *Source* Walker & Dixon (1991) p. 35

Fig. 4 Interior of St Malachy's Church, Belfast, N Ireland (1844). *Source* irishcathedrals.blogspot.com

The Gothic Revival

It was towards the middle of the nineteenth century that ecclesiastical architectural styles began to evolve from the galleried Classical and "faux" Gothicised styles that had been popular in the late Georgian period, towards more sophisticated historical revivalist styles as the century progressed. The most prolific of these was the Gothic Revival, which completely transformed ecclesiastical building design. What made this Gothic Revival different to the Gothicised styles that went before was that a new scholarly and functional approach was taken in the design of churches (Eastlake 1872), with the implementation of "ecclesiastically correct" church plans, that accommodated pre-Reformation liturgical practices. (Lewis 2002; Sheehy 1977). The Gothic Revival made such an impact on nineteenth century church building that, by the end of the century, it had established itself as the ultimate "church style" in the popular consciousness (Drummond 1934) and pointed arches and tall towers were thought of as the very epitome of ecclesiastical building (McNamara 2017).

"Gothic" is used to describe an architectural style that evolved from Romanesque architecture in Europe in the twelfth century (Fig. 5) and lasted until the sixteenth century, when it was succeeded by the architecture of the Renaissance Period (Hendrix 2013). Gothic architecture is characterised by its lofty exteriors and light airy interiors, with its emphasis on height and ornate decoration giving the appearance of grandeur and excellence. Primary features associated with Gothic architecture include pointed arches, load bearing buttresses and vaulted ceilings, which all

Fig. 5 York Minster Cathedral (1472). *Source* Gary Ullah wikimedia

provide functional support for the building. Decorative elements included the use of pinnacles and battlements, which also help weigh down the building and in later styles, windows are finished with increasingly elaborate tracery (Drummond 1934; Hendrix 2013).

During the medieval period, the English developed their own unique Gothic styles, which were categorised by Thomas Rickman in the early nineteenth century in his work, *An Attempt to Discriminate the Styles of English Architecture, From the Conquest to the Reformation* (1817). Rickman placed medieval English Gothic into three general chronological stylistic definitions, which are still extensively referenced in Gothic Revival study today (Stanton 1968). They are; the Early English style (1180–1250), which is characterised by its lancet windows and increasingly elaborate tracery; the Decorated style (1290–1350), which is characterised by rich

ornament and spatial complexity; and the Perpendicular style (1350–1540), which is characterised by verticality, linearity, repetitive panelling and increasingly complex rib patterns. Medieval Gothic buildings were also constructed using stone, and building plans represented the theology, philosophy, and epistemology of medieval England (Hendrix 2013; Stanton 1968). Church plans were dictated by Christian medieval worship practices and at the very least, contained a nave and developed chancel area, with a relatively sizeable amount also incorporating a cruciform layout that involved the use of transepts and sometimes clerestories (Stanton 1968).

Augustus Northmore Welby Pugin (1812–1852)

The Gothic Revival gathered momentum in Catholic church building in the 1840s and it was prolific architect Augustus Northmore Welby Pugin (1812–1852) that was at the forefront of developments (Walker 2000). Disillusioned with aspects of industrialisation, Pugin perceived the architecture from the medieval period as deriving from a more humane and cohesive society, in which "common faith and not capitalising" was the organising principle (Lewis 2002). He idealised the "holiness" of medieval Christendom and promoted medieval Gothic "pointed" architecture as the organic product of the Catholic faith (Stanton 1968). Carrying a deep disdain for the architectural styles of the classical and faux Gothic churches of the late Georgian period, Pugin viewed the styles as products of paganism and European enlightenment (Heimann 2006). He derided both the aesthetic exterior and interior plans of the buildings, claiming that they were built "with the least regard to tradition, mystical reasons, or even common propriety" (Pugin 1841).

Pugin condemned preaching centred church plans as "abominations" and "intolerable" and claimed that they should be "utterly abolished" (Pugin 1843), describing late Georgian church interiors as "a room full of seats (constructed) at the least possible cost". Adding further that any ornament applied to the buildings were "tacked on" to hide the "meanness" of the building (Pugin 1841). He described picturesque Gothic designs as "a great defect" and "shells", which take on the appearance of "pointed" churches but they "were applied to Classical masses"; and when faced with the interior, the "illusion" of authentically Gothic architecture "vanishes" (Pugin 1836, 1841).

Pugin also claimed that an ecclesiastical architect had to work with his faith as well as his architectural knowledge and ability; as it was essential that the architect understood and embraced the church's liturgy, rubrics, rites and ceremonies (Pugin 1836; Walker 2000). Ecclesiastical architects in Pugin's view would then fully understand that "each portion of the church was destined for a particular use, in which arrangement and decoration perfectly corresponded" (Pugin 1836).

Idealising the Gothic architecture that immediately preceded the Reformation, he claimed that Decorated and Perpendicular Gothic edifices had "attained a most extraordinary degree of excellence in this country" (Pugin 1836). He discussed how the medieval English parish church, with its nave, developed chancel, pillars, aisles, and clerestory was the "proper model for present imitation" (Pugin 1843). Even though he idealised English Gothic parish church designs, he generally

regarded them as "deficient in height" and he expounded the "internal altitudes" of French Gothic Cathedrals such as Amiens, Beauvais and Chartres, which he perceived would "add greatly to the effect of English models" (Pugin 1841). He also promoted the use of spires "raising above the roofs" as in his view, these were an expression of a moral and spiritual order (Drummond 1934).

Pugin was the leading voice on the advancement of ecclesiastically correct Gothic Revival architecture (NIAH 2006). His ideas spread throughout the West by means of his extensive architectural practices in both Ireland and Britain, along with his popular writings. Due to this, Gothic Revival architecture eventually infiltrated all Christian denominations to a greater or lesser extent (Walker 2000). His most prolific Gothic church buildings in Ireland include St Aiden's Cathedral in Enniscorthy, County Wexford which was built in 1843 (Figs. 6, 7) and St Mary's Cathedral in Killarney, County Kerry, which was completed in 1855. In the United States, Pugin's ideas spread swiftly, and within months of the release of his publication True Principles (1841), Richard Upjohn had revised the designs he had created for Trinity Episcopal Church in New York. It is highly evident that the Perpendicular style church (1846) was inspired by Pugin's ideas and in many Gothic Revival publications, the Church is regarded as setting a precedence for the expansion of the Gothic Revival in ecclesiastical building within the United States (Lewis 2002; Loth and Sadler 1975; Smith 2006; Wheelwright 1939).

Fig. 6 St Aiden's Cathedral Enniscorthy, Wexford (1843). *Source* Andreas F Borchert wikimedia

Fig. 7 Interior of St Aiden's Enniscorthy. *Source* Andreas F Borchert wikimedia

Evolving Gothic styles

During the 1860s, concepts and interpretations of Gothic Revival architecture moved beyond Walpole's purely aesthetic Gothic of the late Georgian period and Pugin's "ecclesiastically correct" Gothic, to more eclectic Gothic Revival styles (Eastlake 1979). Church designs became increasingly variable and there was also a divergence from the use of strictly English models to the introduction of Continental style elements (Whiffen 1981). At the forefront of these developments was art critic John Ruskin (1819–1900), who provided social and artistic interpretations of Gothic Revival architecture that moved beyond strict ecclesiastical associations and offered broader interpretations, functions and origins for Gothic architecture, that included placing more emphasis on Medieval Craft Guilds. He also provided organic interpretations for the development of Gothic architecture and linked Gothic design features to natures forests and caves (Smith 2006). Like Pugin, Ruskin denounced the industrial age and its "machine-based ornaments" (Ruskin 1849) and he idealised medieval societal attitudes and building techniques, stating that the medieval Gothic was "built in an era of good building by men who lived a life of freedom, humility and joy" (Ruskin 1849). However, unlike Pugin, Ruskin was a staunch Protestant and was neither a ritualist nor apologist for Rome (Clarke 1969). He denounced Pugin (Conner 1978) and his strict associations of the Gothic with Catholic liturgical practices, mysticism and symbolism (Loth and Sadler 1975).

Ruskin's taste in Gothic architectural styles was comprehensive and although he lauded the English "earliest" Decorated style, he also commended French Gothic and Italian Romanesque. However, above all, he favoured the Gothic of Venice

(Fig. 8), which he stated was Gothic "in its purest development" (Ruskin 1849). This broadening of concepts and introducing of continental styles within Gothic Revival building offered the ecclesiastical architect greater scope in creating increasingly variable and eclectic Gothic Revival churches (Loth and Sadler 1975). Catholic architects were also receptive to introducing Italian Gothic features into their building designs, due to their close associations with Rome (Clarke 1969).

Ruskin's fresh input into Gothic Revival thinking increasingly influenced many young architects, who had previously been content to follow Pugin's lead (Whiffen 1981). His literature was more widely read in the United States than his native England and, although Ruskin's ideas are apparent in many British churches, his ideas were exceptionally popular in the United States. This was likely due to the United States not having a Gothic tradition to look back on; and they were not as troubled about what may have been perceived in some circles in England as substituting an "alien style over a national style" (Loth and Sadler 1975). Popular Venetian Gothic features introduced into American Catholic church building at the time include the use of campaniles, polychrome brickwork and mixes of pointed, square and round-headed window designs.

A growing reverence for French Gothic was also developing in American church design. In the mid-1860s, when France was in the middle of their own Gothic Revival, French Gothic style elements gained popularity in American Catholic Church building. Inspiration came from the building of such flamboyant Gothic Revival structures as the Sainte-Clotilde Cathedral (Fig. 9), which was designed by

Fig. 8 St Lawrence Metropolitan Cathedral, Genoa, Italy (late fourteenth century). *Source* KOMMYHA wikimedia

Fig. 9 Basilique Sainte Clotilde, Paris (1857). *Source* Mbzt Wikipedia

F.C Gau of Cologne and completed in 1857. There was also an increased interest in the research and refurbishment of original medieval French structures, including the thirteenth century edifice of Chartres Cathedral in Paris (Loth and Sadler 1975). Other prominent influences included the designs and writings of the architectural historian Eugene Viollet-le-Duc (1814–1879), who was responsible for the restoration of many Gothic churches in France, and he also produced popular writings including, *Dictionnaire Raisonne de l'architure Francaise du XI au XVI Siecle* (1854) (Eastlake 1979). Popular French features that became apparent in American Catholic church building included, large and intricately decorated rose windows, three-portal facades with highly ornate pointed archivolts, pediments and

tympanums, along with tapered twin spires and stone-lace ornamentation (Loth and Sadler 1975).

In the post-Civil War years, the doctrines of Pugin still carried weight in Catholic church building, due to the close associations between ecclesiastically correct layouts and Catholic liturgical practices and many Catholic churches were still built to an ecclesiastically correct plan (Lewis 2002; Sheehy 1977). However, a mix of English, Italian, French and occasionally German Gothic elements were introduced to building exteriors, which resulted in building styles becoming less homogenously English Gothic in style. A notable example of an eclectic Gothic Revival edifice in the United States is James Renwick's (1818–1895) St Patrick's Catholic Cathedral in New York (Fig. 10). The building is heavily adorned with French Gothic elements, but it kept an ecclesiastically correct layout that featured strong English detailing. The cathedral formerly opened for worship in 1879, and the spires were completed in 1888 (Loth and Sadler 1975).

Why study?—Research aims

Keely's architectural career flourished at a time when the Catholic church in the United States was going through its greatest expansion in America's history. As already outlined, the Irish were at the forefront of these developments, as they were the most dominant ethnic Catholic group at the time, due to the millions of Irish Catholics that emigrated to America throughout the century. Keely entered the United States ecclesiastical architectural scene in 1842, at a time when Catholic architects in the United States were rare, and he quickly became the dominant Catholic architect of the era, when he completed his first commission in Williamsburg, New York in 1846. He went on to design most of the Catholic Cathedrals in the North-East of America, as well as several hundred parish churches, and his designs can be observed as far west as Watertown in Wisconsin and as far south as Charleston in South Carolina; with examples also located in Canada. He also transformed Catholic church construction and design when he built his first commission in a Gothic Revival style. Described as a "new epoch" in American Catholic church building (Kervick 1953), the style took hold and remained the dominant style for the remainder of the century.

However, despite these achievements the documentation of his life and work is scant when compared to other contemporary ecclesiastical architects of the era such as Richard Upjohn and James Renwick (Lewis 2002; Loth & Sadler 1975; Smith 2006; Stanton 1968; Wheelwright 1939). There is only one pamphlet and journal article dedicated to his life and work, which are; Francis W. Kervick's, *Patrick Charles Keely, architect: A record of his life and work* (1953) and Richard J Purcell's journal article, *P. C. Keely: Builder of Churches in the United States* (1943). Generalised literature concerning the impact of the Gothic Revival in America tends to focus on Episcopal church building (along with other Protestant denominations), and any mention of its impact on Catholic worship spaces is limited. However, there are fleeting mentions of Keely's achievements in specialised Catholic publications, such as parochial histories and diocesan chronicles (Purcell 1943).

Fig. 10 St Patrick's Cathedral New York (1879). *Source* Farragutfu wikimedia

Kervick (1953) speculated that the neglect of Keely's legacy could be attributed to the era's prevalent anti-Irish-Catholic bigotry, along with professional jealousy from colleagues, who resented the fact that Keely, who lacked any formal training, was in constant demand. Kervick's explanations are plausible, but they could be expanded on further. The neglect of Keely's legacy could also be the result of wider issues concerning the way in which Irish Catholic history was traditionally portrayed within the context of the general history of the United States. Up until

around the middle of the twentieth century, American history was often built on an Anglo-Protestant, or post-Protestant national culture, with Anglicans and other Protestant denominations taking a central role in America's colonial history (Egan 1968). Catholics, and particularly Irish Catholics, were not considered as influential shapers of America's history, and critics of the Catholic intellectual record have considered causal factors as to why this was so. These include: the immigrant background of the Irish; their generally lower-class status; a lack of an intellectual tradition; their perceived weak achievement orientation; their ghetto mentality; clerical paternalism and authoritarianism; etc. (Gleason 1970). Due to this, positive Catholic contributions to mainstream American culture were often played down in the historical narrative and this attitude would have been at its most endemic when Keely was designing his churches, due to the already mentioned anti-Catholic bigotry that was widespread at the time.

In the early twentieth century, anti-Catholic bias was a part of academic life and Catholics were often viewed as inhabiting distinct and often insular subcultures, which resulted in the premise of Catholic "otherness" (Tentler 1993). This resulted in problems with integrating Irish Catholic history into the overall story of America's historical development (Gleason 1970). A consequence of this was a lack of interest among American historians as to the role Catholics played within mainstream American society. American Catholic history at this stage was often a specialised ecclesiastical history, that concentrated on the internal development of the church, and it was usually of prime interest to Catholic historians only (Rischin 1972). Meagre studies concerning Irish immigrants often concentrated on the lower classes, and their reception and adjustment upon arriving in America; with general narratives often portraying them as "passive victims" in an often-inhospitable society (Gleason 1970).

Fortunately, from around the middle of the twentieth century onwards, and prompted by the growth of social history, literature concerning the role that Irish Catholics played within shaping American society expanded greatly; and Catholics were integrated more fully and intelligently into reconstructions of the American past (Tentler 1993). Studies moved away from the linear perceptions of preceding decades and instead of concentrating on institutional aspects of the Church's history, along with how the American environment affected immigrant Catholics, studies began to focus more on how Catholics contributed to American Society and culture. There is a wealth of literature now that details how Irish Catholic immigrants settled, shaped and defined American cities. Along with how they influenced demographic shifts and ethnic changes, which impacted on the nation's economy, as well as its social, religious and political landscape (Mitchell 2006).

However, research into the extensive influence of the Irish on the expansion of the American Catholic Church in the nineteenth century, and particularly their role in standardising American Catholic church building and design (Smith 2006) is still lacking in study. Therefore, studying the work of Patrick Charles Keely, the architect that was at the forefront of these developments, not only adds to his legacy, but also builds on the legacy of the evolution of the Catholic Church in nineteenth century America and its associated Irish heritage. In addition, it adds another dimension to the study of the impact of the Gothic Revival on American worship spaces, by

documenting its influence within Catholic church building. This can then be added to the literature that is already available concerning the impact of Gothic Revival architecture on Protestant churches and provide a more holistic perspective that includes Catholic churches alongside Protestant studies.

Ultimately, this article aims to demonstrate the impact the Gothic Revival movement had on American Catholic Church building and the substantial role that Keely played in these developments. This was achieved by researching and recording the architectural and historical development of the Catholic Church in the United States, in the years before Keely's arrival, to demonstrate the architectural changes that took place when Keely began designing churches. The architectural features of Keely's churches were then studied in chronological order and the changes in architectural styles were observed and recorded. Individual churches are also discussed alongside a general local historical setting, to provide historical context surrounding the buildings and to demonstrate the strong Irish influence in the building of these churches.

Information was obtained by analysing the features of the individual churches themselves and researching archival material on individual buildings from the National Register of Historic Places (https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/index.htm). Contemporary Diocesan Chronicles, parish histories and secondary historical sources were also used. As were online sources, which included church histories, that were available on many individual church websites.

Brief architectural and historical scene pre-keely

The Catholic church in the United States expanded rapidly in the 1840s and church building programmes increased. As already noted, mass Irish Catholic immigration at this stage resulted in the church becoming increasingly dominated by an effective Irish contingent (Shea 1878; Smith 2006) and Catholic immigration from other European countries and Canada were almost negligible in comparison (Egan 1968). However, this was not always the case, as up until 1815, the American Catholic population was predominantly Anglo-American with a discernible French minority, that numbered around 100,000. They were scattered across the north-eastern region (Dolan 2). The first ethno-demographic changes were recorded in 1818 in New York's Catholic population by the second Bishop of New York John Connelly (1750–1825). The bishop documented in his notebook that New York was home to c.16,000 Catholics that were mostly Irish. He added further that approximately 10,000 of these had arrived in the three years prior to his recording (Egan 1968).

New York, along with Boston was the destination of choice for most Irish Catholics from 1815 until the 1830s, due to the job opportunities that were available in both cities. It was not until the late 1830s, when the chance of employment came with the proliferation of various railroad lines, that many more Irish Catholics were drawn to other States (Lord et al. Vol II 1944b). Church building in urban areas at this time generally followed the neoclassical fashions of the late Georgian era. In New York, renowned classical architect Minard Lafever (1798–1854) designed the Ionic St James' church in Manhattan, which opened for worship in 1837 (Fig. 11). Although, it should be noted that in later years, Lafever

Fig. 11 St James' Catholic Church Manhattan (1837) *Source* Shelley (2007)

unhesitatingly switched his output from Greek to historically correct Gothic once fashions started changing (Miller 1971).

Other classical New York Catholic churches included Old St Mary's Church, Manhattan (1833) (Riordan 1914), St Peter's Church Manhattan (1838) (Fig. 12) and the Church of the Transfiguration in Mott Street (1815), which was originally home to the Zion Episcopal Church (Dunlap 2004). A pseudo-Gothic example in New York is the old St Patrick's Cathedral (now demolished) in Mott Street, which opened for worship in 1815. The name was chosen by Bishop Carroll to reflect that a large body of New York's Catholics were now Irish (Egan 1968). Its design was essentially aesthetic Gothic ornament attached to classical plans. It was the largest religious structure in New York at the time and it was designed by Father Joseph Francois Mangin, the celebrated New York architect who also designed New York City Hall. The building was regarded as "the finest Catholic church in the country" at the time of completion (Dunlap 2004).

Fig. 12 St Peter's Catholic Church, Manhattan (1838). *Source* Beyond My Ken: Wikimedia

In Boston, the "most famous architect of the town" architect Charles Bulfinch (1763–1844) (Lord et al. Vol I 1944a) designed The Church of the Holy Cross (which became a cathedral in 1808), after supplying plans for the building to his friend Bishop John Cheverus (1768–1836) without fee (Scanlan 1908). The church opened for worship in 1803 (Kenney 1908) and it was a rectangular structure that was Ionic in design (Fig. 13) and was typical of the galleried churches of the late Georgian period (Fig. 14). Bulfinch was America's first native born professional architect and his comprehensive portfolio largely consisted of civic and public buildings, that were designed in the neoclassical styles (Kirker 1969). Some of his notable commissions included the State House on Beacon Hill, along with the Capitol at Washington (Kenney 1908).

Aside from The Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Boston, only two other Catholic churches had been built by 1810 throughout the New England region. These were the small-bricked colonial-style edifice of St Patrick's church in Newcastle, Maine and a log chapel for the Native Americans at Pleasant Point in Maine (Scanlan 1908). Outside of New York and Boston, it was not until the 1830s that Catholic church building gathered pace to accommodate the ever-increasing numbers of Irish Catholics that were flocking to many areas throughout the north-east. The initial architectural styles of these buildings were unpretentious and rudimentary and were described by the Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis, Austin Dowling (1868–1930) as "plain wooden types" (Dowling 1899); although some were also rudimentary bricked structures and others were old church buildings that were purchased from Protestant denominations (Dolan 2009).

Fig. 13 Old Cathedral of the Holy Cross, Boston (1803). *Source* Public Domain Wikipedia

Rudimentary type church designs with rectangular plans (that sometimes-incorporated galleries) can be found throughout Massachusetts during the 1830s and 1840s. Examples in Boston include old St Mary's Church in Charlestown (1834) (Fig. 15) and old St Patrick's Church in Roxbury (1835) (Fig. 16) (Kenney 1908). Both churches were simplistic in design, and St Mary's was described as "resembling a warehouse, save for the cross and cupola at the front" (Lord et al. Vol II 1944b) and was a vernacular rectangular structure, with a mix of plain square and round-headed windows. St Patrick's was less elaborate again and was a bricked mass with plain windows and a single portal in the façade; and the building was topped with a rudimentary wooden cupola. The interior of St Patrick's was a rectangular galleried interior, with a recess incorporated for the altar, that was typical of other Catholic churches of the era (Kenney 1908). St Patrick's Church in Watertown (dedicated 1848) was also constructed in a meeting house style with round-headed windows and a modest wooden porch. The interior plans included an open hall space, with one large recess for the centre altar and two smaller recesses for the flanking minor altars (Sullivan 1895).

Fig. 14 Interior of Old Holy Cross Cathedral. *Source* Public Domain Wikipedia

Fig. 15 Old St Mary's Church Charlestown, Boston (1834). *Source* Leahy (1899)

Fig. 16 Old St Patrick's Church, Roxbury (1835). *Source* Leahy (1899)

Two examples of early Catholic churches elsewhere include the old Church of the Assumption in Middlebury, Vermont, which was completed in 1840 (Michaud 1899). It was a plain rectangular building with three round-headed windows in the façade, along with three square-headed portals. The structure was also topped with a wooden cupola. The wooden edifice of the original St John the Baptist Church in Castleton (Coffin 2001), which was erected in the mid-1830s (Michaud 1899) is a typical example of the "plain wooden types" that Dowling described (Dowling 1899). It is a rectangular wooden structure with basic Gothic detailing that includes plain pointed windows and a pointed-framed portal; and there was also a quatrefoil shaped window located in the upper section of the façade (Coffin 2001).

Carpenter's Gothic was also a popular design choice in the United States (Lewis 2002), before ecclesiastically correct Gothic architecture made an appearance. The plans for Carpenter's Gothic churches were essentially the same as the pseudo-Gothic styles that were popular in the late Georgian period, only buildings were constructed with wood instead of brick (Loth & Sadler 1975). The style became popular, due to the incredible abundance of quality timber in the United States and strong carpentry traditions (Loth and Sadler 1975). This style was evident in the construction of old St Patrick's church in Lowell, which was the first Catholic church built in the town, and it was dedicated for worship in 1831 (Fig. 17).

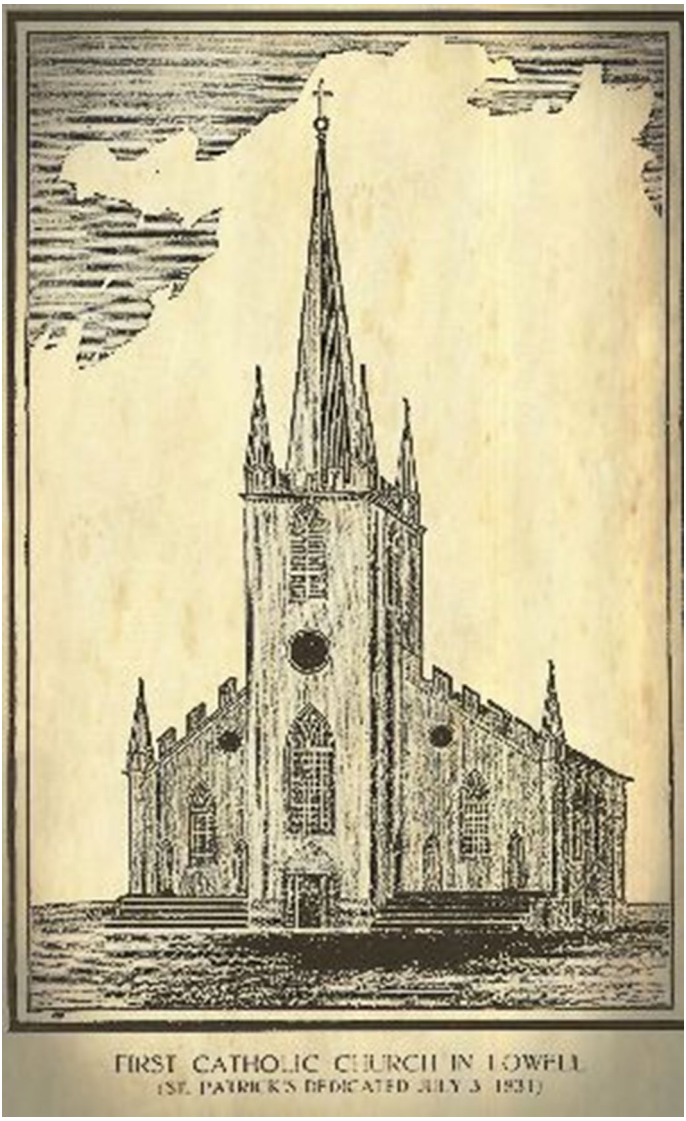

Fig. 17 Old St Patrick's Church, Lowell (1831) *Source* Mitchell (2006)

Keely's early career

Keely entered the United States and he settled in Brooklyn in 1842, when Irish Catholic immigration was fast reaching its peak. He initially worked as an artisan and carpenter, designing altars and working on decorative detailing for various churches, including Lafever's St James' Church in Manhattan and St John's Church in Newark. The altar he carved for St James' was admired for its "fine" tracery and his work

garnered the attention of a young priest named Father Sylvester Malone (Purcell 1943). Malone was sent to form a parish and build a church at Williamsburg in Long Island (Kervick 1953) and he asked Keely to create plans for the new church. Keely presented plans of a Gothic Style building, that were eventually accepted by Archbishop Hughes (1797–1864), after initial reservations that the church designs were too ambitious for such a poor parish (Purcell 1943).

The building opened for worship to critical acclaim in 1846 (Fig. 18) and became the centre of attraction throughout the region, with its dedication marking a "new epoch" in Catholic Church building in the United States (Kervick 1953). One local newspaper described the church as "ecclesiastically correct" and "quite

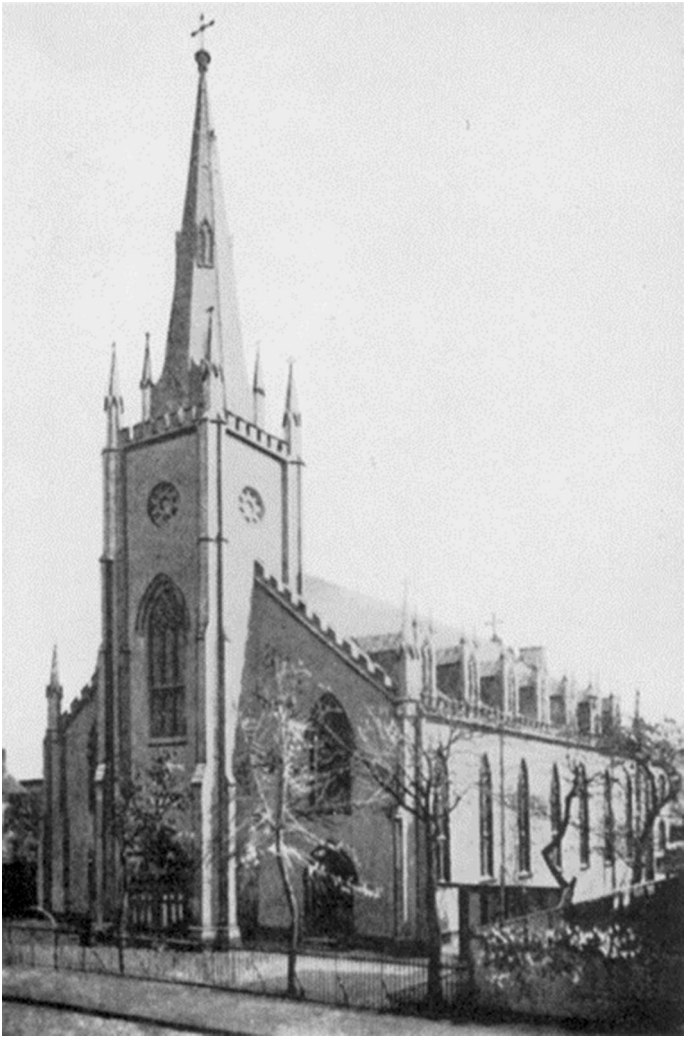

Fig. 18 SS Peter and Paul's Church, Williamsburg, New York. *Source* Catholic Editing Co c.1914

the reverse" in comparison with the "tawdry, modern grandeur" of the pseudo-Gothic that had gone before, which they documented as "a profusion of ornament and costly work without effect". A Catholic chronicler also described the church as a "splendid specimen of Gothic architecture" that was built to "correct architectural proportions" (Purcell 1943). It is clear with the attention that the church received, that the deviation away from Classical and "faux" gothic style facades to a Gothic Revival exterior was innovative and novel to the local population. The completed edifice did contain universal Gothic features such as pointed arches, pinnacles, battlements, and window tracery (Whiffen 1981). However, it adhered to the Classical plans of preceding years and was bereft of a medieval layout. Plans also included a shallow sanctuary and galleries, both of which were abhorred by Pugin (1841).

The lack of authentic medieval plans was rooted in Keely designing this church with financial restrictions, and he was having to accommodate a large congregation in a relatively small space. Also, Irish immigrants coming into the United States were not used to elaborate churches and ceremonies, which were common within Episcopalian and French Catholic circles. This stemmed from the historic persecution they faced under penal legislation in their native land. Kervick (1953) noted that people that had been forced to attend ceremonies back in Ireland in rudimentary buildings, or on a hillside, with a rock serving as an altar, were happy at this stage with "a space for the altar and a roof over their heads" (Kervick 1953).

In comparison with SS Peter's and Paul's and in the same year that it opened, elitist Episcopalians dedicated the grand and highly authentic Gothic Revival Trinity Church in New York, after Richard Upjohn (1802–1878), who was catapulted to national fame after designing the church became acquainted with Pugin's writings. It was described as one of the "purest and grandest specimen of the style yet seen in America" (Fig. 19) (Loth and Sadler 1975). Fellow Episcopal architect James Renwick jr. had also received his first major commission to design the Grace Episcopal church (Fig. 20), described as "one of the first American designs to show a true understanding of the Gothic Revival style". It too opened for worship in the same year as Keely's SS Peter's and Paul's and the church was the beginning of a career for Renwick as one of America's most successful ecclesiastical architects. This culminated for him in the design of one of New York's most recognisable churches, St Patrick's Church in Manhattan, which opened for worship in 1879 (Loth and Sadler 1975).

Despite SS Peter and Paul's not being in the same league as contemporary Episcopal creations, Keely's career as an ecclesiastical architect flourished and he quickly became "celebrated" as the first Irish Catholic architect in the United States. Mass Catholic church building programmes were ongoing in the late 1840s and Irish priests sought out Keely to design their churches (Purcell 1943). Keely's next few churches in New York also followed basic Gothic templates and included St Brigid's church in Manhattan (Fig. 21). The first stone for St Brigid's church was laid in September 1848 and the church was constructed so rapidly it was described by contemporary historian John G Shea (1878) as a "remarkable achievement, as Ireland had just passed through the terrible famine" and due to this, calls on the charity of the Irish Catholics of New York were "constant and pressing" (Shea 1878).

Fig. 19 Trinity Episcopal Church, New York (1846). *Source* Yale University Public Domain

Nevertheless, the church was dedicated for worship on 24th December 1848 and it was a large rectangular structure that was adorned with Decorated Gothic-style pointed windows (Dunlap 2004; Kervick 1953; Purcell 1943). Even though the structure highly resembled the pseudo-Gothic of earlier decades, historian John G Shea (1878) described it as "an attempt to copy the elegance that the builders of the Middle Ages threw into their churches in Europe". He commented further that the church was a "great step in advance" in Gothic architectural design, as, in Shea's view, many of the earlier Catholic churches built previously in New York were "substantial and plain" (Shea 1878).

However, it is clear from the church plans that Keely still had a way to go in erecting authentically "ecclesiastically correct" Gothic churches as promoted by Pugin, as the interior, which can still be observed today, exemplifies the large Galleried churches of the late Georgian period (Fig. 22). Although, the vaulted ceilings and arcades of pointed arches, that are used to support the galleries demonstrate that Keely was starting to incorporate authentic medieval Gothic features into his church designs. Other

Fig. 20 Grace Episcopal Church, New York (1846). *Source* www.gracechurchnyc.org

churches that Keely built in New York at this stage and in a similar fashion, include St Nicholas Kirche (now demolished) in East Second Street Manhattan, that was also erected in 1848 for the local German Catholic population (Dunlap 2004, Purcell 1943, Riordan 1914, Shea 1878). Along with St Patrick's Church in Kent Avenue in Brooklyn (now known as St Lucy-St Patrick's) that was dedicated for worship by Bishop Laughlin in 1856 (Sharp 1954). Examples elsewhere include the Church of the Assumption in Philadelphia (now abandoned), which was dedicated for worship in 1849.

Increasingly authentic Gothic churches

Going into the 1850s, Irish Catholic immigration had reached its peak and Catholic life was flourishing in the larger towns and cities (Scanlan 1908). In the New England States, more Irish Catholic immigrants were moving there than any other

Fig. 21 St Brigid's Church, Manhattan (1848). *Source* Chris06 Wikimedia

Fig. 22 Interior of St Brigid's Church, Manhattan (1848). *Sources* Chris06 Wikimedia

ethnic group (Lord et al. Vol II 1944b); and Catholicism gained footholds in many of New England's traditionally Puritan towns and villages, that earlier in the century would have been deemed impenetrable (Purcell 1943). New parishes were formed and church building in the region proliferated exponentially, to accommodate this great wave of Catholic settlers (O'Connor 1998; Young 1899), as both clergy and laity wanted to build elaborate structures that symbolised their growing presence and influence. Keely's practice expanded rapidly as a result and towards the end of 1854, there were no less than thirty-six churches designed by him under construction (Lucey 1957).

Keely's first commission in New England (NRHP 2007) was St Mary's Church in Newport (Fig. 23). It was the earliest Catholic parish founded in the State of Rhode Island and was established in 1828 (Lord et al 1944a, b). The church was dedicated in 1852 to accommodate the increasing Irish Catholic population that had settled in the area to work in the mills and breweries. There were also plentiful domestic roles in Newport for Irish women in the hotels, or with wealthy families in the seaside town (Dowling 1899). The church is a dramatic example of the changes in architectural designs from rudimentary small Catholic worship spaces in New England to more ornate and ecclesiastically correct models, that reflected the growing prosperity and influence of at least some Catholic parishioners in the North-East of the United States. The cost of the church was largely met by the more affluent members of society, which included wealthy Catholic parishioners from Baltimore and New York, who spent their summers in Newport (Kervick 1953; NRHP 2007). The local Newport residents were generally working class and the building of the extravagant

Fig. 23 St Mary's Church, Newport, Rhode Island (1852). *Source* googlemaps

church would likely have resulted in failure if it were left solely to their contributions (Dowling 1899).

The church could accommodate 700 parishioners, was quintessentially English Decorated Gothic in design and was built to correct ecclesiastical plans (Fig. 24). Keely also added his own personal touch to the building, with his executed designs of the ornamental hammer beam ceiling. It was described as a "great achievement of ornamental woodwork" that was "carved with such delicacy that it almost appears weightless" (NRHP 2007). St John's Church in Middletown Connecticut was dedicated in the same year as St Mary's and it was constructed to a similar template (Figs. 25, 26). It is the earliest building of the Gothic Revival style in Middletown (NRHP 2007) and was built to accommodate the stream of Catholics that settled in Middletown between 1845 and 1850 (O'Donnell 1899). Many of the parishioners worked in the Portland quarry and the building of the church advanced quickly, due to the generosity of the Portland quarry owners, who donated the brownstone for the building of the edifice. Funds were also collected quickly through sales of lots in the newly established cemetery and the building was also constructed by local volunteers (CHC 1978).

St Joseph's Catholic Church in Providence, Rhode Island was dedicated in 1855, to accommodate the large numbers of Irish Catholics that were settling there. The Bishop of Hartford Bernard O'Reilly (1803–1856) encouraged the local people to build a church and Reverend Joseph Stokes was appointed first pastor of the district (Dowling 1899). The parish was by no means an affluent one at this stage and it did not have the extensive funding, or the resources of the two previous churches. The church is not as ornately decorated as St John's or St Mary's and was described

Fig. 24 Interior of St Mary's Church, Newport. *Source* www.stmarynewport.org

Fig. 25 St John's Church, Middletown, Connecticut (1852). *Source* googlemaps

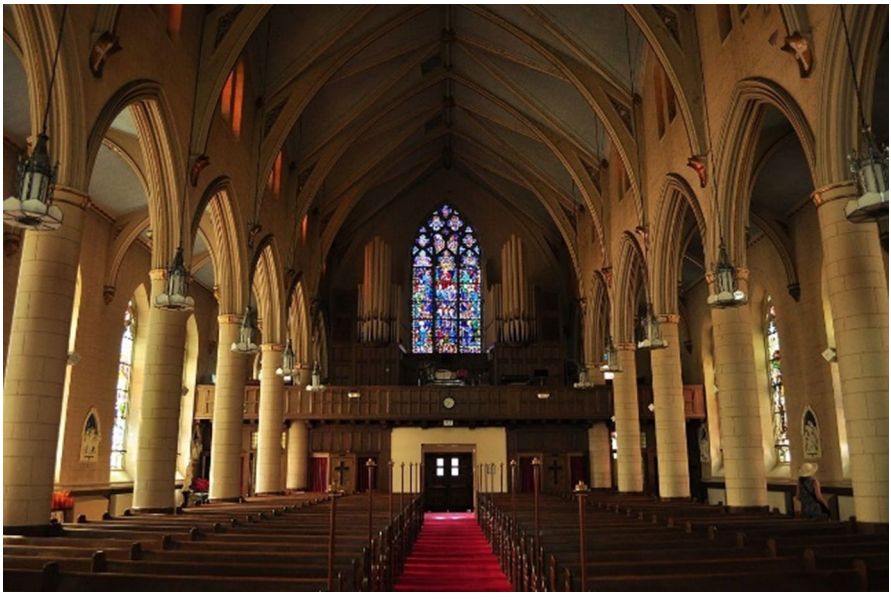

Fig. 26 Interior of St John's Church, Middletown. *Source* Joe Mabel Wikimedia

in the application for its inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places as "austere" (NRHP 1973). The church is generally Early English Gothic in style, but it does contain Decorated Gothic elements. The church plans include a nave and developed chancel area, with the chancel featuring a large three-light decorated window. This church also contains galleries that are still in existence today and are fixed to the iron clustered arcades, which are encased with plaster and painted a stone colour, to give the effect of clustered columns.

Keely's first commission in Massachusetts was the first Catholic church to be constructed in Newburyport. The Immaculate Conception Church (dedicated in 1853) was a red-bricked modest Gothic edifice that featured a belltower and generally early English style Gothic elements. Although a beautiful Decorated five-light window was originally contained in the chancel wall. Interior plans included a triple-aisled nave and separate chancel area, with pointed arcades leading up to and terminating at the chancel area. The church was also designed with a clerestory. Although the church was less extravagant in its exterior, when compared to some of Keely's later achievements, it was a remarkable advancement from the rudimentary designs that dominated earlier Massachusetts' churches. It was also built on the slender earnings of the majority Irish working class population. Irish Catholics had flocked to the town to work on the railroad and in the cotton factory, that were both established in the town in 1841 (Leahy 1899).

In the same year that Immaculate Conception Church was dedicated, Keely also introduced ecclesiastically correct Gothic Revival plans into Gridley F Bryant's pseudo-Gothic style SS Peter and Paul's Church in Boston; after the original 1843 church was badly damaged in a fire in 1848. Keely generally kept the exterior elements of Bryant's church but remodelled it to include a nave and developed chancel area, side-aisles, and a transept. He also introduced clustered arcades with foliated capitals to the building, along with a corbelled roof and a roodscreen, which was placed over the altar (Sullivan 1895).

Cathedrals and cathedralesque churches—Idealistically Pugin

When Keely designed his early churches, he was already planning his first cathedral in Albany. At this stage in Albany's history, the Catholic population was increasing steady and persistently, from its humble beginnings, when the first church of "Old" St Mary's was built in the late eighteenth century (Louden 1895). Like the rest of New York state, the Catholic population in Albany County increased dramatically in the 1840s and peaked around the time of the Great Famine. The County was a desirable place for Irish immigrants to settle, due to the need for labour regarding canal building, shipping and civil construction (McCoy 2019). To accommodate the burgeoning Catholic population, New York's first Archbishop John Hughes (1797–1864) and Bishop John McCloskey (1810–1885) envisioned an inspiring Cathedral with a commanding view of Albany, that would provide Catholic worship within the diocese for generations to come; and they commissioned Keely to draft the plans (Purcell 1943).

Due to the high expectations of Hughes and McCloskey, Keely had the opportunity to display his talents to the full when designing the cathedral, as he was not hindered by expense restrictions (like many of his other commissions) and he was able to "develop his principles of architectural practice" (Kervick 1953). The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception (1852, Fig. 27) was the first authentically correct Gothic Revival Cathedral to be built for the Catholic church in the United States. It was designed to "ecclesiastically correct" Gothic Revival plans that exemplified Pugin's ideas and it set a precedence for the establishment of ecclesiastically correct Gothic Revival designs within Catholic church building in the United States. It also gave Keely a reputation as "the Prince of church architects" (Purcell 1943). The building was constructed with dark brown sandstone and its large dimensions include a length of two-hundred and thirty feet, along with an extreme height of two-hundred and ten feet at the top of the taller spire (Louden 1895).

The beautiful Decorated Gothic edifice equalled Upjohn's and Renwick's Episcopal designs in splendour. This is highly exemplified by the large Decorated window and three pointed arched portals in the front of the façade, as well as the adornment

Fig. 27 The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Albany (1852). *Source* Matt H Wade Wikimedia

of Decorated Gothic windows that run down the two side elevations; with large Decorated Gothic windows also incorporated into the outer walls of the transept. The lofty French-style towers are also in line with Pugin's principles, as, although he idealised English Gothic models, he quoted that they were generally "deficient in height". As already noted, he idealised the twin towers of French cathedrals such as Amiens and Chartres, discussing that their internal altitude would "add greatly" when incorporated into English styles (Pugin 1841). Other external features that follow Pugin's lead include the tall spires, which Pugin felt should be "universally restored" on all church buildings (Pugin 1843); along with the flying buttresses, which he stated not only "beautify" the building but are necessary to "support a lofty wall" (Pugin 1841).

The church plans were also authentically medieval (Fig. 28) and featured a church nave demarcated with pillars and aisles, along with a transept, clerestory, and apsidal chancel area, which were all in line with Pugin's principles (Pugin 1841). The interior of the building is highly reminiscent of the large Gothic cathedrals of the middle-ages, with its elegant ribbed vaulted ceilings and enormous blocked imitation freestone arcades of beautifully decorated pointed arches. The arches run up the length of the spacious nave and terminate at the chancel area; were a grand high altar takes centre stage. It is interesting that some of the rich stained-glass windows featured in the structure had direct links to Pugin and were manufactured by John Hardman & Company in Birmingham. John Hardman was married to Pugin's eldest daughter Anne, and he manufactured metalwork, stained-glass and other furnishings

Fig. 28 The Interior of the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception, Albany. *Source* Nheyob Wikipedia

for notable churches of the era. He was also actively involved in continuing the promotion of Pugin's ideas after Pugin died in 1852 (Fisher 2017; Kervick 1953).

The building of the beautiful cathedral at Albany caught the attention of the first Bishop of Buffalo John Timon (1797–1867) and he commissioned Keely to draw up the plans for St Joseph's Cathedral in Buffalo, which was dedicated on 6th July 1855 (Fig. 29) (Donohoe 1904; Purcell 1943). St Joseph's is an elegant Early English Style Cathedral, with a cruciform plan incorporating a transept, clerestory, chancel and triple-aisled nave with pointed arches that terminate at the chancel area (Fig. 30).

Like the rest of New York State, Irish Catholic immigration increased dramatically in Buffalo from its modest beginnings in 1817, when initial Irish settlement in the region consisted of a small community living in flats near Exchange Street, with many residents working on the Erie Canal. By the mid-nineteenth century, most Irish immigrants settled in an area of Buffalo known as the Old First Ward and they gained employment on the docks, railroads, lumber yards and grain elevators. With the help of the Sisters of Charity, Bishop Timon founded churches, schools, soup kitchens and a cemetery to serve the expanding immigrant community. He also helped alleviate many of the hardships that the Irish faced and promoted education (Licata 2015). St Joseph's was opened to critical acclaim and holds a place in the affections of the local Catholic population (Kervick 1953). A Diocesan Annalist from the Catholic Sentinel described the church as "a masterpiece of church architecture", stating further that it was constructed by the "learned architect Mr Keely" who was the most prominent "promoter of ecclesiastical architecture in our Western Hemisphere" (Purcell 1943).

Fig. 29 St Joseph's Cathedral, Buffalo, NY (1855). *Source* www.googlemaps.co.uk

Fig. 30 Interior of St Joseph's Cathedral, Buffalo. *Source* college.holycross.edu

Another notable Keely church in Albany was St Joseph's (now abandoned), which was dedicated for worship (with the exception of the tower) in 1860. Like Albany's cathedral, it appears that no expense was spared when designing this beautiful church. This vast 212 by 116-feet edifice was described by historian Michael J Louden as "one of the handsomest churches on the continent" (Louden 1895). Adding further that it gave the impression of a building from the European middle-ages, that was "carried across the centuries and set up on American soil" (Louden 1895). It was constructed in blue limestone and trimmed with French Caen stone. However, in 1866, the Caen stone was replaced with Ohio limestone, due to the original stone not weathering well. The centralised tower located in the façade of the building is an immense two-hundred and thirty-five feet high and it housed ten bells (Howell and Tenney 1866).

Keely was also responsible for the rebuilding of St Patrick's Church in Lowell (Figs. 31, 32), transforming the old Carpenter's Gothic church into an authentic Gothic style, which was rededicated for worship in 1854. At this stage in Lowell's history, the Irish Catholic immigrant population had become the main labour force and was firmly established in the region (Murphy et al 2019), with 28% of the newly confirmed city's 37, 553 inhabitants registered as Catholic Irish. These numbers continually increased until after the Civil war in the 1860s, when the Irish accounted for almost half of Lowell's population and the majority of its immigrants (Marston 1988). The construction of the new St Patrick's Church symbolised the increasing power of the Catholic church in Lowell, as many Catholics in the area

Fig. 31 St Patrick's Church Lowell, MA (1854). *Source* EMW Wikimedia

were growing prosperous under the pastorate of Father James T McDermott (Sullivan 1895). It was a "most magnificent structure" of Cathedral proportions, of stone laid in cement with an impressive central tower. The new church was the largest of any denomination in Lowell at the time of construction, and it dominated the skyline for miles around, overshadowed only by the mills. Few churches in the country at this stage were equal to its splendour and it measured one-hundred and seventy feet long, by one-hundred feet through the transept. It had a seating capacity of two thousand, which was eight hundred more than the old St Peter's church within the town (Mitchell 2006).

Another example of a large stone Gothic church that Keely designed in the 1850s was the Cathedral of St Mary the Assumption (gained Cathedral status in 1904), in the industrialised town of Fall River, which was dedicated in 1855 (MHC 1981).

Fig. 32 Interior of St Patrick's Church, Lowell. *Source* EMW Wikipedia

The granite structure was built under the pastorate of Father Edward Murphy, where the Catholic population had rapidly outgrown an old wooden framed church. Murphy asked Keely to design the church as in his view, he was "the most widely known and successful Catholic architect of his day" (Dowling 1899). While not as imposing or exquisite as his Cathedrals in New York of the same period and not quite as authentic in appearance as St Patrick's church in Lowell, the church is regarded as "one of the finest specimens of Gothic architecture in Massachusetts" (Purcell 1943).

The Cathedral of John the Baptist (1870) is another authentic Gothic Revival church that Keely designed in Paterson, New Jersey (Fig. 33). The cathedral was an ecclesiastically correct edifice constructed in brownstone, which was obtained from local quarries in Little Falls. Its dimensions are one-hundred and eighty feet by eighty feet; and it has a tower and spire that reaches two-hundred and twenty-five feet (NRHP 1977). The church could sit comfortably in the townscape of

Fig. 33 Cathedral of John the Baptist, New Jersey (1870). *Source* Farrgutfu Wikipedia

any Victorian British town or city; and the darkness of the stone, combined with the mix of Decorated and Early English features bares resemblance to Pugin's celebrated Grade 1 listed building, St Giles Catholic Church in Cheadle, Staffordshire (1846) (Pevsner 1974; Short 1981). Another authentic example was the old brownstone Cathedral of St John and St Finbar in Charleston, South Carolina (1854), which was unfortunately destroyed by fire in 1861. However, Keely was also responsible for the designs of the replacement Cathedral, which was renamed the Cathedral of St John the Baptist, and it was completed in 1907 (Kervick 1953).

An interior feature that Keely also included in many of his authentic Gothic church designs (with inspiration likely coming from his carpenter experience), was the incorporation of highly decorated and intricately carved wooden beam ceilings, which were in addition to, or in place of the groined or ribbed vaulted ceilings that were usually included in his plans. This indicates that Keely was becoming confident enough in his career to begin adding his own unique elements to an otherwise copied Revival style. Examples of these beautiful additions can be found at St Mary's Church Newport, Rhode Island (1852), St Mary's Church Fall River, Massachusetts (1855), St Joseph's Church Albany, New York (1860) and St Mary's Church Lawrence, Massachusetts (1871), along with St Patrick's Church Hartford, Connecticut (1876).

Mid-1860s onwards—continental style Gothic

Keely's church designs from the late 1860s onwards broke away from a strict adherence to English Gothic Revival models, to a broadening ecclesiastical architectural eclecticism that also borrowed from Continental Europe (Whiffen 1981). He progressively incorporated blends of Venetian and French Gothic elements, alongside English Gothic into his church designs. This included the use of large and intricately decorated rose windows, that were placed on focal walls, along with the use of stone-lace ornamentation and three-portal facades, with intricately decorated archivolts and tympanums. Examples include the unusual French-style edifice of Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Burlington, Vermont (1867), which was the first Catholic cathedral constructed in New England. A flamboyant example is the three-portal facade that was designed for St Mary's Cathedral in Halifax (1869). However, it should be noted that Keely generally kept ecclesiastically correct interiors for all churches at this stage, due to the close associations between medieval layouts and Catholic liturgical practices.

A distinctly apparent example is Immaculate Conception Church in Lowell (1877, Fig. 34). The church was designed for the Oblate Order and was established to cater for Lowell's French and English communities, who had lived together in Lowell for twenty years prior to the completion of the church.

However, the church became a firm favourite for many residents in the city, due to the high standards maintained there (Leahy 1899). Keely was secured by resident priest Father Garin to design the church and it is a large Gothic pile that seats two thousand (Sullivan 1895). The structure contains a mix of Early English and Decorated Gothic style windows, along with large and highly intricate beautiful French-style rose windows that are situated in either end of the transept. The structure also contains an Italianesque campanile tower. However, the interior of the building adhered to the ecclesiastically correct layout of many of his earlier churches and included a nave, transept and apsidal chancel area, along with clerestory (Fig. 35) (Leahy 1899). It should also be noted that Keely was no stranger to working in Lowell, as he had previously designed the already documented St Patrick's Church in the early 1850s and was also responsible for the red-bricked Romanesque style edifice of Sacred Heart in the city, which opened for worship in 1874 (Sullivan 1895). He also designed his last great cathedral sized church of St Peter's (1900) in Lowell, which is discussed later.

One of Keely's finest works in Massachusetts was dedicated in 1871 and it was St Mary's Church in Lawrence (Fig. 36) (Kervick 1953). This ornate and cathedralesque church was described by Sullivan as "the largest and handsomest structure in the city" and "one of the finest (churches) in New England" (Sullivan 1895) and it was another church in which Keely moved away from strictly English Gothic to include French style Gothic elements. The interior of the building is lofty and spacious and consists of an ecclesiastical layout of a transept, nave, clerestory and apsidal chancel area, along with pointed arcades that lead down the length of the nave and terminate at the chancel area.

The church's roots can be found in the development of Old St Mary's wooden chapel, which opened for worship in 1846, at a time when the town of Lawrence

Fig. 34 Church of the Immaculate Conception, Lowell MA (1877). *Source* Emw Wikimedia

was in its infancy. The small number of Catholics that lived in the area prior to this had no church to speak of and most walked to Lowell for divine service (Leahy 1899). Within a decade, the population had grown so fast, due to the building of a dam, canals, and large mills between 1845 and 1852, that the town was upgraded to city status in 1853. The Catholic population grew in step with the expanding population, as the establishment of these facilities brought a great number of workmen to the town, with a considerable number of these being Irish Catholics (Sullivan 1895).

Fig. 35 Interior of Church of the Immaculate Conception, Lowell. *Source* www.iclowell.org

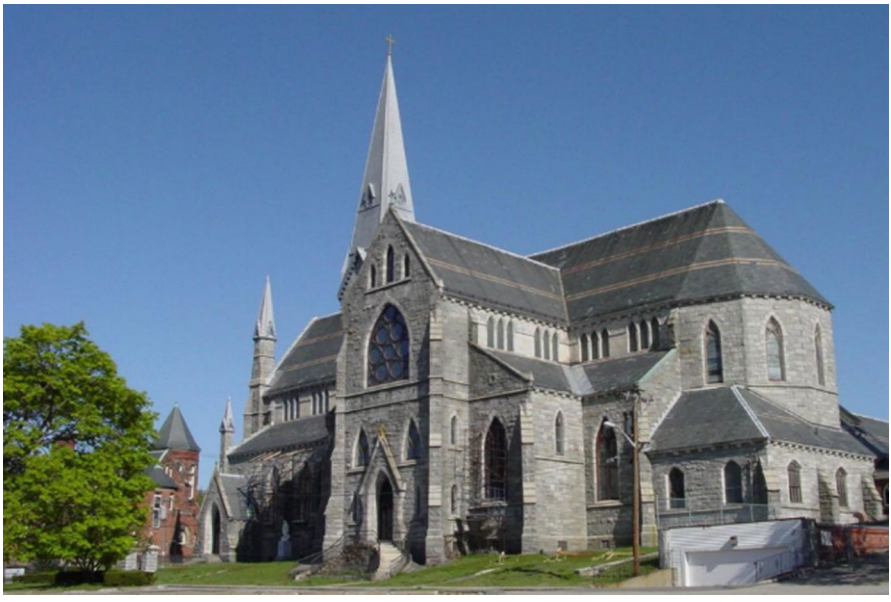

Fig. 36 St Mary's Church Lawrence, MA (1871). *Source* www.weddingmapper.com

Keely's most industrious edifice in Massachusetts is arguably his commission for the rebuilding of the Cathedral of the Holy Cross in Boston, which was dedicated for worship in 1875 (Purcell 1943). Bishop John B Fitzpatrick (1812–1866) wanted this church to be the "crowning glory" of Boston and he designed the plans for the cathedral along with Keely, before his death in 1866. Fitzpatrick had gathered ideas for the Cathedral from his study concerning the Gothic churches of Europe and his ideas impressed Keely so much that he stated that "he had never met a man (like Fitzpatrick) who had such grand ideas of what a cathedral should be" (Lord et al. Vol II 1944b) (see Figs. 37, 38).

Like St Mary's in Lawrence, it was a mix of English and French style elements. It is an imposing stately pile (Leahy 1899) that was almost as large as Notre Dame in Paris and St John Lateran in Rome (O'Connor 1998) and its size surpasses the Cathedrals in Salisbury, Strasbourg and Venice (Sullivan 1895). It covers over an acre of ground and the edifice is over forty-six thousand square feet (Scanlan 1908). It was built using local conglomerate rock from Roxbury and features trimming stones of a lighter colour (Kervick 1953). The church also housed the second largest organ in America and was able to seat a choir of over three-hundred members (Scanlan 1908). The dedication of the cathedral also coincided with a very important change in the status of the Church in New England, as, by a special decree, Boston was made an independent Archdiocese that was separated from the ecclesiastical province of New York; and Bishop John J Williams (1822–1907), who was Bishop Fitzpatrick's successor, was made its Metropolitan (Kenney 1908).

Fig. 37 Cathedral of the Holy Cross, Boston (1875). *Source* Google maps

Fig. 38 Interior of the Cathedral of the Holy Cross, Boston. *Source* Algfail Wikipedia

The Immaculate Conception Cathedral in Portland, Maine was dedicated for worship in 1869 (Fig. 39) and was described by Robert T Murphy in the *Biographical Dictionary of Architects* as Keely's "most notable work" in Maine. It was designed for the first Bishop of the Diocese, Bishop David W Bacon (1813–1874) (Murphy 1987), who was acquainted with Keely, as both men settled in Brooklyn. Bacon also officiated at Keely's wedding to Sarah Farmer in 1846. The building of the structure was plagued by financial concerns that were exacerbated by the Civil War. Further financial difficulties developed due to a fire that ripped through the city in 1866, which resulted in many Catholic families falling into poverty. Many homes and business premises were destroyed, along with the first phase of construction of the cathedral (Lucey 1957).

Wealthy Catholics in Portland were few, but they were expected to give much to the funding of the edifice (Lucey 1957) and eventually, the largest Catholic structure in Maine opened for worship. It is a French Gothic inspired red-bricked structure with freestone trimmings and a great buttressed corner tower and spire that reaches two-hundred and thirty-six feet in height. The cathedral's dimensions are one-hundred and eighty-six feet by seventy feet and it can seat nine-hundred people (NRHP 3). It exhibits a loftiness in its interior with the addition of a clerestory and it consists of a basic basilican plan of a nave and apsidal chancel area. Clustered arcades run down the two central sides of the nave and meet in the chancel area in a semi-circular fashion.

Fig. 39 Immaculate Conception Cathedral, Portland, Maine (1869). *Source* Rdjekema Wikimedia

1870s—Venetian Gothic

Many of Keely's designs in the later stages of his career completely deviated away from the use of any English and French Gothic elements and were constructed in highly ornate Venetian Gothic styles, as eclectic architectural thinking, coupled with the era's market-based materialism, resulted in the incorporation of a variety of Gothic styles into Catholic Church design. This was especially evident in Keely's "fashionable" urban churches and examples include St Boniface Church in Brooklyn

(1869), The Church of the Holy Innocents in Manhattan (1870) and St Bernard's Church in Chelsea, New York City (1875); with Boston examples including St Peter's Church in Dorchester (1884). For these churches, Keely also departed from strict ecclesiastically correct plans and designed a variety of interiors that were individual to each church. The use of galleries made a reappearance in the design of the three New York churches and their interiors are highly reminiscent of the galleried churches of the late Georgian era. There was also a return to a recess and/or stage area in place of a developed chancel to house the altar.

St Bernard's was an ornate and highly authentic Venetian style and was the first church in the United States to be dedicated by a Cardinal in 1875. An illustration of the church before it lost its coned steeples in 1890 (due to a fire) (Fig. 40), gives the impression of a beautifully ornate miniature European Cathedral that would have been a spectacle in the surrounding townscape. Its ornate style likely came from the fact that this was a church that was built for an affluent congregation, and it

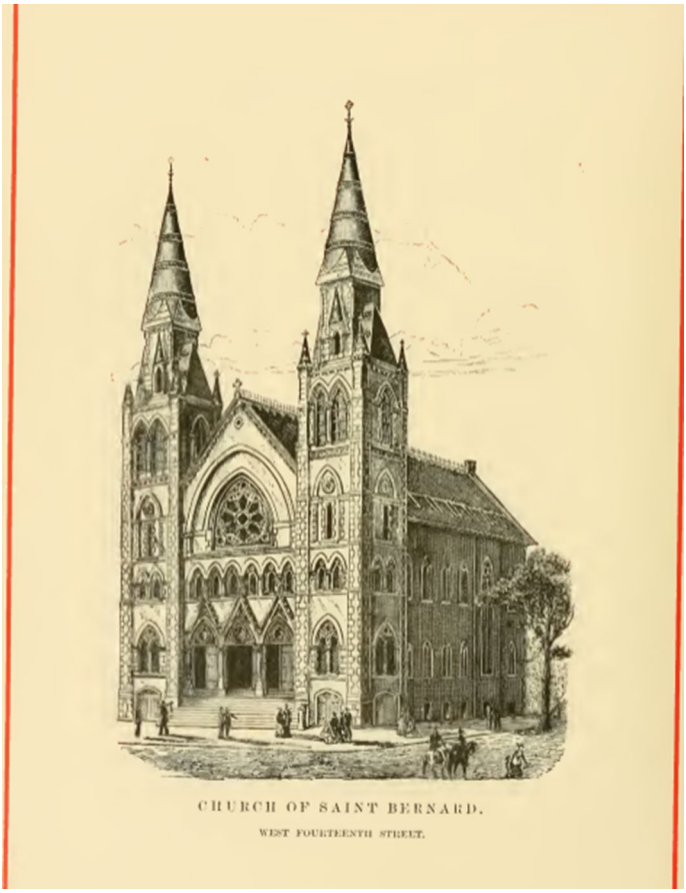

Fig. 40 St Bernard's Church, Chelsea, New York (1875). *Sources* Shea (1878) and Wikimapia

was deemed a "fashionable" church for the weddings and funerals of the City's elite (Miller 2017). The use of galleries (Fig. 41), a feature that was previously perceived as "taboo" in authentic Gothic construction, demonstrates that the strict adherence to historical accuracy and medieval authenticity in ecclesiastical building was becoming less important in "chic" urban church building, as Ruskinian thought on individualism and eclecticism advanced in popularity. It is reasonable to suggest that the elite in the city may have wanted their church constructed in line with the architectural fashions of the time.

Keely also built other urban Gothic churches during the period that neither followed ecclesiastically correct or galleried interior plans. St Peter's Church in Dorchester (Fig. 42) is one example, which was dedicated in 1884. In 1872, the greater part of the Dorchester district of the City of Boston was home to a more prosperous congregation and up until this point it had no Catholic church (Sullivan 1895). The newly appointed pastor, Reverend Peter Ronan set about establishing a church that would meet the wants and needs for the "well-to-do" congregation for years to come. The church was a central object of the Dorchester landscape at the time of completion and was in full view of the harbour and South Boston.

Due to the affluence of the congregation, the church was constructed at a cost of $300,000 and was free from debt at the time of completion (Leahy 1899). This ornately designed venetian church, that was described by Sullivan as a "poem of architectural beauty" was built using Roxbury pudding stone laid in broken ashlar work and contained Cape Ann granite trimmings (Sullivan 1895). The interior of St Peter's (1884), along with St Mary's in Charlestown (1892) (Figs. 43, 44) are described by author William Augustine Leahy (1899) of having an "uncommon

Fig. 41 Interior of St Bernard's Church. *Sources* Shea (1878) and Wikimapia

Fig. 42 Interior of St Peter's Church, Dorchester, Boston (1884). *Source* Boston Herald

Fig. 43 Bird's eye view of the interior of St Mary's Church, Charlestown, MA (1892). *Source* www.stmarycatherine.org

Fig. 44 Interior of St Mary's Church, Charlestown, MA. *Source* www.stmarycatherine.org

amplitude", due to the absence of supporting columns, as the nave and aisles were delineated by "the arrangement of the roof" (Leahy 1899). The interiors are completely open-plan, with no pillars or arcades. The roof of the interiors are comprised of highly decorative and intricately complex hammer beam ceilings, which form a single span and rest entirely upon the side walls. Elaborate beams protrude out from the ceiling into the interior to delineate the nave and aisles. There is also space reserved at the front of the nave for the altar.

Both churches display highly unusual interiors when compared with other contemporary churches and on the surface, it appears to show Keely experimenting with new designs in ecclesiastical construction, especially when it came to smaller, affluent congregations in urban areas. However, the first church to be built with an open timber roof, that was supported wholly on hammer beams and spandrels was St John's Episcopal Church in Buffalo in 1848. The edifice was designed by Calvin N. Otis (Loth and Sadler 1975) and an illustration reveals that its interior was remarkably similar to St Mary's church. Although, whether Keely was directly inspired by Otis' design is unknown.

The designs of Keely's last two cathedrals and his last cathedral-sized church are highly ostentatious Venetian designs and were described by Sullivan (1895) as "massive and imposing" (Sullivan 1895). As outlined earlier, Ruskinian thought was popular at this stage and the Catholic church also embraced Venetian designs due to their close associations with Rome. Although there are many variables in dimensions and decoration, the structures contained the same general attributes when it came to architectural form and layout. All buildings featured a mix of Romanesque and Gothic window detailing, the façade was flanked by two campaniles on each building and all were incorporated with ecclesiastically correct interiors. An

additional feature that is included within all the church interiors are the beautifully decorated wooden panelled ceilings, that contain centre pieces of highly elaborate religious artwork, which are located in the transept area.

First up was Saints Peter and Paul's Cathedral in Providence, Rhode Island, which was dedicated for worship in 1889 (Fig. 45). The Cathedral was constructed at a time when the Catholic population in Rhode Island was increasing rapidly and "prospering wonderfully". The first Catholic Bishop of Providence, Thomas F Hendricken (1827–1886) supervised the project, and was known as a clergyman that could organise parishes effectively and command large sums of money (Dowling 1899).

The massive Cathedral is a testament to his determination and the Connecticut brownstone building dominates its surroundings (NRHP 1974). The imposing Venetian structure filled an entire block upon completion, and it is one-hundred and

Fig. 45 Sts Peter & Paul's Cathedral, Providence, Rhode Island (1889). *Source* Kenneth C Zirkel Wikimedia

Fig. 46 St Joseph's Cathedral Hartford Connecticut (1892). *Source* www.ctpostcards.net

ninety-eight feet in length and has an extreme width of one-hundred and thirty-six feet. The cathedral plans are ecclesiastically correct and cruciform. (Fig. 46) and the structure contains a clerestory. There are also galleries incorporated into the clerestory, which reach out into the arcades, along with an organ gallery that is located on the entrance wall (NRHP 1974).

Keely's last cathedral in New England is St Joseph's Cathedral in Hartford Connecticut, which was dedicated for worship in 1892 (Fig. 47). The Catholic population of Hartford was advancing westwards and St Patrick's and St Peter's parishes were already established to accommodate parishioners in the east and south of the city. At this stage, the population of the Cathedral parish was estimated at roughly five-thousand seven-hundred parishioners, that were mostly Irish and their descendants. This magnificent cathedral was also Venetian Gothic in design and the structure could sit approximately two-thousand two-hundred and fifty persons (O'Donnell 1899). It contained seventy-two stained-glass windows in a mix of round and pointed styles and it was "surpassed by few similar edifices on the American continent" (O'Donnell 1899). The complex and intricately carved groined wooden ceilings also highly resemble the ceiling in the Providence cathedral. It should also be noted that the original altar in St Josephs was also designed by Keely (O'Donnell 1899). Unfortunately, this beautiful Cathedral succumbed to fire in 1956 and it was replaced with the present cathedral in 1862 .

The last cathedral sized church that Keely designed was the second church of St Peter's in Lowell, which was dedicated for worship in 1900 (Fig. 48); 4 years after Keely died. The plans for the grand Continental Gothic edifice were regarded by Keely as among the finest he had ever created, and the structure was described as having a "massive and imposing" appearance (Sullivan 1895). The edifice could be

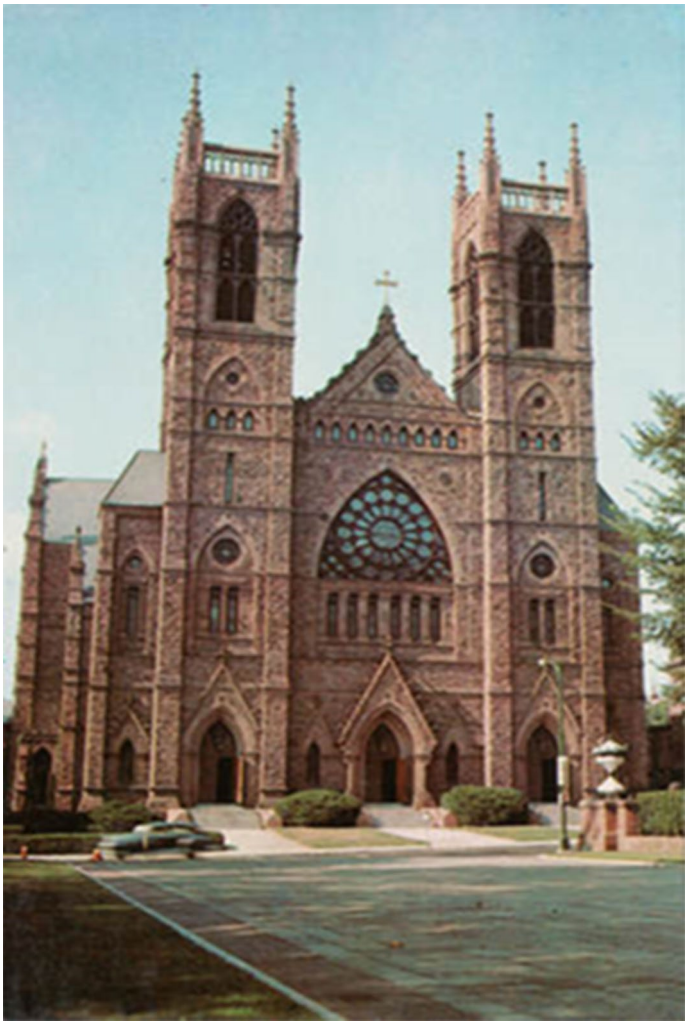

Fig. 47 Interior of Sts Peter & Paul's Cathedral, Providence. *Source* Kenneth C Zirkel Wikimedia

seen from many parts of the city and it was at the centre of the Chapel Street Irish community (McKean 2016). Unfortunately, the building was closed due to declining enrolment in 1986 and was eventually demolished after falling into a state of disrepair in 1996 (Owen 2018).

When comparing Keely's last cathedrals with the cathedrals constructed earlier in his career, such as The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Albany (1852), it can be demonstrated that his drive to design relatively "pure" English Gothic style Cathedrals was replaced with a preference to build imposing structures in Continental Gothic designs. He was also adding his own unique elements, such as the highly intricate wooden panelled ceilings and incorporated artwork. However, Pugin's

Fig. 48 St Peter's Church Lowell, Massachusetts (1900). *Source* Leahy 1899

ideas still carried weight in the plans for important cathedrals; and the eclectic interior layouts that were reserved for his fashionable "downtown" churches were set aside in favour of strict ecclesiastically correct layouts. This was likely due to the difficulty in disentangling the historic and perceived architectural importance that link medieval layouts to Catholic worship practices.

A lasting legacy—a "practical" Gothic design

When it came to the building of his most notable cathedrals, or "fashionable" urban churches, Keely was essentially a "copier" of contemporary Gothic fashions, and he followed changing ecclesiastical architectural trends closely, while adding his own unique interior elements, such as intricately carved ceilings. However, most of his commissions involved designing churches for poorer congregations, that were dealing with limited finances. As Keely's career progressed, he had to devise ways to build Gothic churches that were authentic yet affordable for these congregations and he developed a general "go to" plan for the designs of many of his churches, that did not alter dramatically throughout his career. These churches are instantly recognisable as "Keely" churches.

The exterior design of these churches generally resembled the Carpenter's Gothic churches of earlier decades that consisted of a façade with a centralised tower, that is flanked by two sloping aisle gables. However, the church plans were usually a basic basilican plan that comprised a nave and apsidal chancel area. Although occasionally, a developed chancel, transept and/or modest clerestory were also added. Most church interiors also contained pointed arcades that delineate the nave and they also featured groined or wooden beamed ceilings. They were built in variations of either red-brick or stone and most contained three portals that usually consisted of a portal

in the tower and one in each flanking gable. Churches could then be individualised with variations in decorative Gothic detailing (usually English Gothic in style) according to client affordability and taste.

These churches can be found throughout the United States and at every stage of Keely's career, with the earliest examples surveyed including St Joseph's Catholic Church in Providence, Rhode Island (1855) and later examples include the sacred Heart Church in Waterbury, Connecticut (1889) and St Joseph's Church in Erie, Pennsylvania (1889). Examples also go as far south as St Patrick's in Charleston, South Carolina (1887), as far west as St Bernard's Church in Watertown, Wisconsin (1889) (Fig. 49) and as far north as St Simon and Jude Church Tignish (1860) on Prince Edward Island in Canada. Red bricked versions with white stone trim that are extremely similar in design include St Anthony's Church, Brooklyn (1874, Fig. 50), St Stephen's Church Brooklyn (1875, Fig. 51) and the already mentioned

Fig. 49 Most Holy Trinity Church, Detroit, Michigan (1855). *Source* Elli Wikimedia

Fig. 50 St Anthony's Church, Brooklyn, New York (1874). *Source* Jim.henderson Wikimedia

Sacred Heart Church in Waterbury, Connecticut (1889). While less elaborate, red-bricked examples include the Church of the Holy Name of Jesus in Chicopee (1859, Fig. 52), which was one of the first Catholic churches built in the region.

Chicopee developed into a major industrial centre in the mid-nineteenth century and an immigrant pool made up of mainly Irish Catholic labourers settled there to work in the factories. These immigrants brought significant cultural changes to the Connecticut River Valley, which had been predominantly Congregationalist and almost exclusively Protestant up until that point (Strahan 2018). Another church that Keely designed in a similar fashion and at around the same time, was St Jerome's church in Holyoke. Holyoke was nicknamed "The Irish City", as the Irish came in large bodies in the 1830s to work on the dam, canals and railroads (McCoy 1899).

Fig. 51 St Stephen's Church Brooklyn, New York (1875). *Source* Jim.henderson Wikimedia

The Church is also listed as Keely's 100th church, and it was the first of many Catholic churches and religious institutions to be constructed in the town after it was dedicated for worship in 1859 (Strahan 2018).

Keely's first ever church he designed in Maine, St John's Church in Bangor (Fig. 53), was another red-bricked example dedicated for worship in 1856 (Lucey 1957). The development of Catholicism in Maine and New Hampshire was particularly slow up until the mid-nineteenth century; and when Bishop David William Bacon (1813–1874) was named the first Bishop of the Diocese of Portland in 1855 (a diocese which covered both States at this time), there were only eight churches

Fig. 52 Church of the Holy Name of Jesus, Chicopee, Massachusetts (1859). *Source* www.masslive.com

and six priests in the entire region (Young 1899). In 1842, the Catholic population of New Hampshire was estimated at just one-thousand three-hundred and seventy and this has been attributed to the strong anti-Catholic spirit of the State proving to be an effectual barrier to the progress of the faith. This changed in the 1850s, when both States experienced a dramatic growth in the Catholic population and Catholic life soon proliferated (Finen 1899).

In the 1850s, Bangor's Catholic population had grown to approximately six-thousand and although St Michael's had already been established there, a new church was required. The church of St John's is an imposing structure and Reverend J. A. Young described it as "a high-quality local example of Gothic Revival architecture"

Fig. 53 St John's Church, Bangor, Maine (1855). *Source* www.inbangor.com

and "one of the finest churches in the State" adding further that it stands as "a major symbol of the city's Irish American heritage" (Young 1899). It was also described by Historian William Lucey as the "best bricked edifice in the country" (Lucey 1957).

The church is a Gothic Revival style building that is minimalist in design and overall, it exuberates symmetry and "clean" and straight components. The parishioners at this stage were generally needy and poor, due to the poverty and sickness that plagued many of the incoming immigrants (Young 1899). The minimalistic approach was taken due to the limitation of funds and historian Robert Murphy recorded that "intricate carved ornamentation was sacrificed" for the "inspirational

effects that were to be gained by the soaring monumentality" of both the exterior and interior (Murphy 1987). The church was also built at the height of Know-Nothingism in the 1850s, and Catholic buildings in Maine were particularly vulnerable to vandalism and arson. The Catholics of Maine were thus concerned with spending money on a costly church, for it then to be vandalised or destroyed by fire (Lucey 1957). St John's Church is a large structure that is one-hundred and fifty-six feet by ninety-eight feet wide through the transept and can accommodate up to fifteen-hundred people. Its plans are cruciform and include a nave, transept and separate chancel area, although, there is no clerestory. The edifice also contains a centralised tower and spire, which is topped with a cross that reaches one-hundred and eighty feet in height (NRHP 1972).

Keely designed two other red-bricked structures in Maine at Biddeford and Lewiston. St Mary's Church in Biddeford was built for Biddeford's Irish community and dedicated for worship in 1858 (Young 1899) and St Joseph's church in Lewiston followed in 1865 (Fig. 54). Both the Biddeford and Lewiston churches were a similar format to St John's in Bangor, and both possessed a centralised tower and two sloping gables in the façade. Like St John's, they incorporated relatively plain Gothic detailing, however, both buildings were much smaller than the Bangor church. As with St John's, both the churches were vulnerable to vandalism and it was documented that Irish labourers stood guard when the churches were constructed (NRHP 1972). It should also be noted that St Mary's Church in Biddeford was demolished

Fig. 54 St Joseph's Church, Lewiston, Maine (1865). *Source* John Phelan Wikipedia

in 1923 to make way for a new church, but St Joseph's in Lewiston still stands on Main Street (Murphy 1987).

Examples in stone

As already outlined, many of these "practical" Gothic churches were also constructed using stone. The stone gave the illusion of grandeur and elegance, which distracted from the use of basic Gothic detailing. One example is St Bridget's Church in West Rutland, Vermont, which was dedicated for worship in 1861 (Fig. 55). St Bridget's is a beautiful church that was built using the finest local marble and it replaced an earlier framed church that was demolished (Michaud 1899). Like the brick churches, the edifice consists of a centralised tower in the façade, which is flanked by two sloping gables. The interior of the structure is simplistic in design and follows a basic basilican plan of a nave and separate chancel area, with arcades of thin-columned arches running the length of the nave and terminating

Fig. 55 St Bridget's Church, West Rutland, Vermont (1861). *Source* googlemaps

at the chancel area (Coffin 2001). The chancel area also features a highly intricate stained-glass rose window in the upper section of the chancel wall.

Many of Keely's stone churches can be found in the State of Connecticut and the bulk of his commissions there were constructed from the mid-1870s into the 1880s. This reflected the fact that Connecticut witnessed the most dramatic changes in religious demographics in New England, except for Massachusetts, throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century. There was a rapid increase of Catholics into the State beginning in the 1840s, with most of them being Irish labourers. By 1890, there were 152, 945 Catholics living in the region, giving them a 5,761 majority over the 142, 184 Protestant population (O'Donnell 1899).

St Augustine's church in Bridgeport (1868, Fig. 56) is a grey-stone building with a front-facing centralised tower and octagonal steeple, which is flanked by two sloping gables. The building plan is basic basilican and consists of a nave and apsidal chancel area; with interior features including groined ceilings and arcades. Another example is St Peter's Church in Danbury Connecticut, which was dedicated for worship in 1875 (Fig. 57), to help cater to the six-thousand Catholic population in the region, of which five-thousand were Irish and their descendants (O'Donnell 1899). The church was constructed using rusticated granite that was quarried locally and its one-hundred and seventy-five-foot spire was a prominent landmark that was visible throughout the district (NRHP 1983a; b). The façade of the church features a buttressed tower, with ornate turrets incorporated into either side of the tower, that were topped with cone pinnacles. Smaller versions of these buttresses were also

Fig. 56 St Augustine's Church, Bridgeport, Connecticut (1868). *Source* Farragutful Wikimedia

Fig. 57 St Peter's Church, Danbury, Connecticut (1875). *Source* googlemaps

incorporated into the outside corners of the flanking gables. The interior is also of a plain basilican plan, with a nave and apsidal chancel area, with pointed arcades and groined ceilings. Five pointed stained-glass windows were also included in the upper chancel wall.

St Patrick's Church in Hartford was dedicated for worship in 1876 (Fig. 58) (O'Donnell 1899) and the building also possesses a centralised tower with flanking sloping aisle gables. However, the building is quite different in appearance to the grey-stone buildings of St Augustine and St Peter's, due to the use of rough textured brown stone blocks in its construction and increased decorative Gothic detailing. The portal in the buttressed tower is highly ornate and features an embellished pediment that is topped with a cross. The pretty rose window that is located above the portal is set in a pointed frame and the upper stages of the tower include a niche containing a statue of St Patrick. The belfry stage includes large-pointed openings and the tower, which was originally surmounted with a steeple, is now topped with

Fig. 58 St Patrick's Church, Hartford, Connecticut (1876). *Source* Eugenio Hansen Wikimedia

battlements and a large Celtic cross (NRHP 1983a; b). The flanking aisle gables also feature smaller rose windows in each and directly below these are portals, which are smaller, yet similar in design to the main portal entrance. The interior of the building consists of a nave and separate chancel area with pointed arcades and hammer beam ceilings. A beautiful feature of the church is the large decorated five-light stained-glass window with floral tracery that is located on the chancel wall.

Examples of stone churches elsewhere include St Bernard's Church in Watertown, Wisconsin (1876) (Kervick 1953) and St Joseph's Church in Erie, Pennsylvania (1889, Fig. 59). One of the two Protestant Churches that Keely designed is also to a similar template. Asylum Hill Congregational church (1865, Fig. 60) is a beautiful ornate stone church that is situated in Hartford, Connecticut and it was the only Congregational Church in Connecticut at the time that was built in the Gothic Revival style (HBC).

Conclusion

Patrick Keely is arguably the leading architect of nineteenth century Catholic America and he was responsible for the designs of many churches that were built in the new parishes that proliferated in the mid to late nineteenth century. He was also a pioneer in introducing Gothic Revival architecture into Catholic Church building. Keely not only introduced the style, but through his many commissions, he enabled

Fig. 59 St Joseph's Church, Erie, Pennsylvania (1889). *Source* googlemaps

it to become the dominant style for American Catholic church building in the nineteenth century and he continued to develop and transform it as the century progressed. There is no doubt that Keely's Irish Catholic background in an increasingly Irish dominated church, coupled with the rarity of Catholic architects and growing demand for Catholic churches, were prominent factors in Keely's breakthrough as a promising Catholic architect. He also achieved professional status with little formal architectural training, at a time when the general feeling was that a Catholic immigrant could be little more than an artisan or a labourer (Purcell 1943).

However, this should not be used to infer that Keely's career was simply handed to him, largely on account of these factors. The development of an extensive practice quickly and exponentially, through the demands for his services among the Catholic hierarchy and clergy (Decker 2000), would not have materialised if he had not possessed the drive, skills and talent to create many attractive and innovative churches, that caught the eye of prospective clients. His busy practice can be most exemplified in an excerpt from American Historian Reverend William L Lucey's (1903–1969) *The Catholic Church in Maine* (1957). He described Keely as the "best Catholic

Fig. 60 Asylum Hill Congregational Church, Hartford, Connecticut (1865). *Source* Historic Buildings of CT

architect in the country" and explained that "in the fall of 1854, no less than thirty-six churches designed by him (Keely) were under construction" (Lucey 1957). Archbishop Austin Dowling (1868–1930) also fully credits Keely with the architectural style changes that took place in Catholic Church building in his writings concerning the growth of the church in New England with the quote, "Everywhere, churches were being erected, usually of the plain wooden type of the 40 s, but often now, (there was the building of) handsome structures of stone (that were) designed by the young architect Keely" (Dowling 1899). Other Catholic chroniclers described him as a "genius" (Sullivan 1895), along with "distinguished", "famous" and "celebrated" (McCoy 1899; Michaud 1899; Scanlan: 1908), in relation to his pioneering role and the development of his enormous practice.

As discussed earlier, Keely's talents were initially recognised by Father Sylvester Malone (1821–1899), when he became aware of Keely's abilities through minor

work he had carried out at the Church of St John in Newark (Kervick 1953) along with an altar he designed for St John's Church in Manhattan, which was "admired for its fine tracery" (Purcell 1943). His work was enough to convince the young priest that Keely was accomplished enough to create plans for a new church in Williamsburg, despite Keely working at the time as a carpenter and artisan and lacking any form of architectural training (Kervick 1953). Keely's architectural knowledge quickly became apparent through his design choices for the Williamsburg church. His creation of a Gothic Revival design, when New York's Catholic churches were generally built in Classical styles, indicates that he was acutely aware of the changing ecclesiastical architectural fashions that were sweeping the west. It seems that he was determined to bring these changing concepts into New York Catholic church building, despite initial reservations by clergy, and he designed the first Gothic Revival Catholic church to be constructed in the region at the time (Purcell 1943).

This indicates bold initiative on his part, as up until that point, many builders in the city were hesitant to make the full switch from Greek to Gothic, because the timber framing systems that they were trained to use had initially been developed to accommodate Classical rather than Medieval styles. Moreover, shaping planes were made to produce mouldings with Greek or Roman profiles and if the client demanded Gothic, all architects could do was change the shape of the window and door frames from round or flat to pointed; and add a little Gothic ornamentation (Loth and Sadler 1975). He also faced direct challenges from Archbishop Hughes on the building style, as the archbishop initially rejected his Gothic designs, deeming them to be "too ambitious and expensive" for such a poor parish (Kervick 1953). Nevertheless, Keely worked around this rejection by creating a design that was innovative enough to garner positive attention from the surrounding population, yet its simplified plans resulted in the maintenance of the building not placing too much of a financial strain upon the client. He also kept it within a budget that satisfied the archbishop, who eventually allowed for building work to commence (Purcell 1943). This reveals an ability to adapt and mould Gothic Revival styles and produce adequate Gothic buildings that satisfy the resident clergy and laity under the strain of financial difficulties.

When Keely was provided with ample resources during the early stages of his career, however, he was also capable of building beautiful and authentic "historically correct" Gothic Revival churches, with examples including the two cathedrals in Albany and Buffalo, along with St Patrick's in Lowell, as well as smaller authentic churches built in Rhode Island and Connecticut. These were the buildings that solidified his career as the "Prince" of church architects within the Catholic hierarchy, with the Diocesan analyst Reverend Thomas Donohoe describing him in respect of these buildings as the most prominent "promoter of ecclesiastical architecture in our Western Hemisphere" (Donohue 1929).

Keely continued to be at the forefront of changing styles and concepts concerning Gothic architecture throughout his career and kept abreast of popular architectural tastes, by continually transforming his designs throughout the century in line with changing architectural fashions. When the emphasis concerning Gothic building was placed on English styles and historical accuracy, he used English architectural guides for the formulation of his own building practices and architectural ideas

and as already noted, built many authentic ecclesiastically correct Gothic Revival churches in the 1850s and 1860s.

As general trends in Gothic Revival thinking moved beyond primarily historical authenticity and into the realms of eclecticism and originality in the late 1860s, it was evident that Keely was not afraid to branch out. He introduced Continental Gothic elements into his building designs and produced more variable and eclectic Gothic edifices that moved beyond strict adherence to English styles. This is exemplified most when comparing his cathedrals in the 1850s to the last Cathedrals and cathedral-sized churches he constructed at the end of his career, where there was a complete shift from English style models to Venetian styles. He especially kept abreast of changing architectural styles when it came to more affluent urban congregations and he experimented with eclectic Gothic styles, open plan interiors and hammerbeam ceilings in churches in fashionable New York and Boston districts. However, when it came to important Cathedrals and cathedral-sized churches, it was not so easy to disentangle the close associations of medieval layouts with Catholic worship practices. Ecclesiastically correct interiors appeared to be the only fitting style for these notable buildings and Keely kept to Pugin's principles for these building interiors.

The church buildings that Keely produced throughout his career demonstrate that he was a talented architect, who was at the forefront of the changing Gothic Revival styles that dominated American Catholic church building. However, it could be argued that his greatest achievement was in his ability to create a practical Gothic model for smaller parish churches and generally less affluent congregations, by developing a go-to template that he used throughout his career. Churches built in this style made them instantly recognisable as "Keely" churches and it moved him beyond the realms of generally a "copier" of current fashions and trends to an "adapter" of the style, so that parishes in poorer regions could also have their own authentic Gothic churches.

Keely did this by developing a design that generally consisted of a basic basilican plan of nave and apsidal chancel area, although some churches included a transept and modest clerestory. The church façade comprised a centralised tower, usually with spire and two flanking aisle gables. What makes these churches innovative is that they could then be individualised by building them in a variety of different stone types or brickwork. An assortment of decorative Gothic elements could then also be added to individual churches, which were dictated by affordability, client preference and taste.

The bulk of his portfolio consists of these churches and they range from a plethora of ornate little stone churches to urbanised bricked structures with white stone trim. The use of ornate stone and/or white stone trim was also an innovative way for Keely to conceal the plainness of more austere structures through the illusion of grandeur, by producing Gothic effect without the excess of decorative Gothic elements (Purcell 1943). In one instance, Keely sacrificed carved ornamentation in the pursuit of affordability, for the inspirational effects that could be gained from monumentality (Murphy 1987). As discussed earlier, the Church of St John's in Bangor was described as a "major symbol of the City's Irish American heritage", due to its imposing presence, yet it is an austere structure with minimal Gothic detailing.

Another factor that prevented Keely from building churches rich in decorative Gothic elements in poorer parishes, particularly in the 1850s and 1860s, was that some were vulnerable to vandalism and arson, due to the prevalence of militant nativist movements, that were determined to cull the ever-growing Catholic populations. Thus, some parishes were reluctant to spend money on a costly church that could then be vandalised or destroyed by fire (Lucey 1957).

Overall, Keely's Gothic churches were highly variable in style and some were more remarkable than others. He was a highly versatile architect that as already noted, had to adapt his building styles to accommodate different factors such as: financial restrictions, client preferences, changing architectural fashions and concepts, congregation numbers, land-plot size and the threat of vandalism or arson. His portfolio of hundreds of churches is evident that when he was building his Gothic churches, he faced many of these challenges head on and the result is a diverse range of Gothic Catholic churches of all shapes, designs and sizes that were constructed throughout the north-east of America.

He also occasionally designed buildings in other styles and there are a few Romanesque, Classical and Italianate examples included in his portfolio. However, the architect Francis W Kervick explained that Keely was not "in sympathy" with these styles and claimed that this "was apparent" through his designs for St James the Greater Church in Boston (1875) and St Francis Xavier Church in New York City (1882) (Kervick 1953), which were Italianate and Romanesque, respectively. Kervick's findings can be demonstrated through the one-hundred and fifteen notable Keely churches in all regions that were researched for this paper. Ninety-six of these churches were constructed in Gothic Revival styles, in comparison with nineteen churches designed in other styles, which illustrates that Gothic was Keely's dominant and favoured style choice for ecclesiastical construction. He also designed two churches for other denominations, and both were built in a Gothic Revival style. These are the Church of the Holy Redeemer, which is an Episcopal Church in Brooklyn (1866), along with Asylum Hill Congregational Church in Hartford, Connecticut (1865) (Purcell 1943), which was the only Congregational church in the region at the time to be built in a Gothic Revival style (HBC).

As this conclusion ends, it should also be noted that Keely's influence did not end at his many building commissions, but he also trained a new generation of Catholic ecclesiastical architects, that developed their own practices and carried on his influence after he died in 1896. James Murphy (1834–1907) was a noteworthy example, who became a renowned ecclesiastical architect in his own right. He initially trained under Keely, then eventually started a partnership with him that lasted from the mid-1860s until 1875. When the partnership was dissolved, Murphy set up his own practice, and he established offices in Boston and Providence (Eberhart 2002). Murphy became an accredited ecclesiastical Catholic architect in the late nineteenth century and he catered to the ever-growing number of Catholic parishes in the New England region. Notable Gothic structures designed by Murphy in New England include St Mary's Church New Haven, Connecticut (1874, O'Donnell 1899), St John's Church Stamford, Connecticut (1875, O'Donnell 1899), St Mary's Church Westfield, Massachusetts (1885, McCoy 1899) and The Church of St Thomas in Adams, Massachusetts (McCoy 1899). Another famous example is Thomas Houghton (1842–1913),

who was married to Keely's daughter Mary and he was responsible for elaborate New York Gothic edifices such as, The Church of Our lady of Victory, Brooklyn (1895), (White et al 2000), St Francis Xavier Church in Brooklyn (1904) along with St Agnes Church in Brooklyn, which was dedicated in 1913 (Tallerico 2014). Like Murphy, he also trained under Keely, and eventually formed a partnership with him in 1890. He assisted Keely with church designs until Keely died in 1896 and continued Keely's practice in his own name up until he himself died in 1913 (Novelty Theatre 2016).

Supplementary Information The online version contains supplementary material available at https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-022-00464-y.

Data availability The data generated to compile this manuscript is in the public domain and can be easily accessed online. Archives, which are also freely available include The National Register of Historic Places.

Declarations

Conflict of interest On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

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